Over There

WITH PERSHING'S HEROES AT CANTIGNY

CAPT. RALPHSON

To Reuben Sanders

From Daddy

Xmas. 1923.

RUBEN
SANDERS

OVER THERE SERIES

THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY

THE CANADIANS AT VIMY RIDGE

THE DOUGHBOYS AT ST. MIHIEL

PERSHING'S HEROES AT CANTIGNY

R. UBEN
SANDERS

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HAND GRENADES WERE USED TO GET THE ENEMY OUT OF THE FRONT TRENCHES.

[Pershing's Heroes at Cantigny]

OVER THERE
WITH
PERSHING'S HEROES
AT
CANTIGNY

By

CAPT. GEORGE H. RALPHSON

Author of

OVER THERE WITH THE DOUGHBOYS AT ST. MIHIEL, OVER THERE WITH THE CANADIANS AT VIMY RIDGE, OVER THERE WITH THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Sailing Orders	1
II.	Under Way	5
III.	Red Top Gives an Order	8
IV.	A Disturbing Note	12
V.	The Postcard Disappears	17
VI.	A Series of Strange Events	24
VII.	Outwitted	32
VIII.	The Mystery of the Coats Is Explained	39
IX.	Anxious Moments	48
X.	The Race for Port	57
XI.	"Somewhere in France"	66
XII.	Strenuous Work	73
XIII.	On the March	82
XIV.	Under Fire	90
XV.	At the Front	96
XVI.	The Call for Volunteers	103
XVII.	The Forced March	108
XVIII.	The Bearcats Introduce Themselves to the Huns	119
XIX.	A Call for Aid	129
XX.	Red Top to the Rescue	136
XXI.	A Surprise	144
XXII.	In the Hands of the Enemy	151
XXIII.	The Attempted Escape	157
XXIV.	The Bearcats Turn the Tables	164
XXV.	On the Trail of a Band of Spies	172
XXVI.	Red Top Finds Himself an Object of Hun Interest	179

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXVII.	Red Top Plays Decoy	188
XXVIII.	The Counter Attack	198
XXIX.	The Bearcats Take Some Prisoners	204
XXX.	Old Glory—Long May She Wave	212

Over There with Pershing's Heroes

at

Cantigny

CHAPTER I

SAILING ORDERS

"THEY'VE come!"

"Who? What?"

And from all sides of the barracks of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion at Camp Union, keen-eyed, sturdy fellows in various degrees of undress crowded about the excited Yank whose entrance and eager announcement had evoked the chorus of questions.

"Who? What?" snorted the red-headed sergeant who had brought the tidings, in disgust.

"Now, what do you suppose is the only thing that would make me run from the C. O.'s quarters to these barracks when the thermometer registers 300° in the shade?"

And thus answering his own question, the "non-com" whose brilliant-hued hair had

brought him the nickname of "Red Top" cried:

"Why sailing orders, you numbskulls! The 337th entrains this afternoon and in three weeks we 'Bearcats' will be tearing the Heinies into shreds with our steel-bayonet claws!"

"Three cheers for the Bearcats! Come on, now, you huskies, a little pep! One, two, three!" And then such a mighty cheer rose from the throats of Machine Gun Battalion 337, whose members had taken unto themselves the battle name of "Bearcats," that the noonday lull of Camp Union was shattered.

As the joyous outburst reached the ears of other units, the men listened a moment, then with one accord hied them to the long wooden building whence the cheers had come.

Crowding into the Bearcat's barracks, the men from the other units quickly learned the reason for the joy and then shoved and jostled in their efforts to get near the red-headed sergeant that they might ply him with questions, only to find their way barred by others just as eager for first-hand news as themselves.

But the khaki clad youths who were fortunate enough to be in the heaving circle about Red Top left nothing to be desired by their cross-fire of questions.

"What makes you start such a yarn on a day like this?" demanded a tall chap whose insignia proclaimed him a corporal of infantry.

"My 'Loot,' who's in right with the C. O., said he'd wise me as soon as orders came. I—"

"Red Top's a false alarm!" cried another voice. "Come on, let's peg him out where he can repent of getting us all heated up, as he blisters."

With a glance withering in its contempt, the 337th's sergeant gazed at the two speakers.

"Of course the infantry hasn't heard the orders. Infantry never hears anything but the mess call," he exclaimed, with fine scorn.

"'Black Jack' Pershing needs men over there—and so he's sent for the Bearcats."

"If the Bearcats are men, then I'm a walrus," retorted the infantry corporal.

"Right you are, buddie. At least your skin's thick enough for a walrus," said Red Top, with a grin.

This crude sally of wit brought roars of laughter from the other Bearcats and before a semblance of quiet had been restored, the Captain of the Machine Gun battalion appeared in the dooway.

"Turn out your company, Sergeant," he said to Red Top, then withdrew while the non-

com barked out his commands and the men from the other units stood abashed.

As the members of 337 formed in front of the barracks, the Captain smiled at the eagerness visible on every face.

"I judge you have heard the news," he said as his men stood at attention.

"The 337th Machine Gun battalion will entrain at 3 o'clock this afternoon. We should reach the port of embarkation in two days and be in France in three weeks.

"Break ranks!"

For a moment there was silence as the men realized they had received official notification of the orders they had so longed to hear during the seven months of hard, soul-trying training.

Then Red Top held up his hand.

"Three cheers for Capt. Hall, leader of the Bearcats, the men who'll chase the Kaiser out of Germany!" he cried.

And with a roar, the cheers rolled away over the camp.

As the last reverberations died away, mess call sounded and the excited, happy youngsters rushed away to partake of the last Camp Union chow they were destined to eat.

CHAPTER II

UNDER WAY

LIKE wildfire, word of the 337th's luck spread through Camp Union, and when the men had finished their noonday chow, they flocked to the battalion's barracks and critically inspected the Bearcats.

Lively indeed was the chaff and banter exchanged by the happy machine gunners and their less fortunate brothers in arms.

Kits were hurriedly but carefully packed and every piece of equipment was made spotlessly clean under the eagle eye of the redheaded sergeant.

At the Commanding Officer's headquarters there was scarcely less bustle and excitement.

The 337th was the first unit among the 40,000 men in the training camp to receive orders for Overseas' duty.

For this reason, General Montague determined to mark the event appropriately and forthwith issued orders making the afternoon a holiday.

Quickly the intervening minutes passed and as the 337th Machine Gun battalion lined up

in front of the barracks, preparatory to marching to the waiting train, the divisional band appeared.

Wheeling into position at the head of the column, it poured forth stirring music while from other camp streets the tramp of feet and sharp commands proclaimed the coming of various units which were to form a guard of honor for the lucky battalion.

Suddenly, and to the great delight of the Bearcats, General Montague appeared with his full staff and when they had taken position at the head of the column, the march to the train began.

Arrived at the long line of cars, commands rang out which brought the units into company front.

Came a pause, then the band crashed out the glorious "Star Spangled Banner."

At the close of national anthem, General Montague mounted the steps of one of the cars.

"This is a proud day for you and for me who have trained you," he said, addressing the members of the battalion.

"I envy you because you are going to do what every soldier wants to do—and that is fight.

"That you will uphold the traditions of 'Old

Glory,' I have no fear. Your self-chosen nickname of Bearcats assures that.

"I can only say to you that we who are left behind in Camp Union will wait eagerly for reports of our Bearcats.

"May God be with you—Go get 'em! Bearcats!"

"We will!" chorused the battalion, in a mighty roar, casting discipline to the wind.

Rang out a sharp command, the battalion broke ranks and then quickly entrained.

When the last man was aboard, the signal was given to start and amid the deep-throated cheers of the thousands of Yanks left behind, the Bearcats began the first stage of their history making advance against the imperial hordes of Germany.

CHAPTER III

RED TOP GIVES AN ORDER

AS the Bearcat Special—the name which the members of the 337th Machine Gun battalion immediately christened their train,—sped toward the point of embarkation for overseas, Red Top slowly walked through the train.

A martinet for discipline, he was known to one and all of the Company for his fairness—and also for an almost uncanny habit of appearing upon the scene when an infraction of this same discipline was under way.

Consequently, as he progressed through car after car of the train, he was greeted with remarks appropriate to the occasion.

"We've a pack of cards and some 'chicken feed' in our pockets," announced one of a party of six, as he stopped before a table which had been brought in by an accommodating porter.

"Hope you all have as much when you get through," he replied with a grin, and passed on.

For the most part, the men who made up the unit of the 337th Machine Gun battalion were born in the middle west.

All of them had been drafted but, after the first few days of training and military discipline, they had fallen into the routine of army camp life at least with acquiescence and many of them with real enthusiasm.

But there were three or four, headed by a private of questionable antecedents and quickly nicknamed "German Jim," who irritated the sergeant.

True, they had obeyed orders and gone through the long, wearisome days of drill without complaint.

But every time Red Top encountered them, he experienced a feeling of uneasiness.

On several occasions, he had thought he would go to his superiors and tell them of his feelings. Yet each time he had hesitated for the reason that he had nothing definite upon which to base his suspicions. However, during the months of gruelling training, he had kept a weather-eye upon his "black sheep," as he called them, and the men who were under his disapproval seemed to have an inkling of the fact.

So it was no surprise to the sergeant walking through the train when he found the quartet together and busily engaged in writing what appeared to be "good-bye" postcards to their friends. Indeed, Red Top's eye had

found them out even as he entered the car in which they were.

But he dissembled his interest in them until he came opposite their seats.

"Ah, my students are busy, I see," he exclaimed, as he stopped.

"Oh, cut out the josh, Serg," exclaimed one of them, listed on the roster as Private Karl Hoskins.

"We're only sending postcards to some of the girls we didn't have time to say good-bye to," interposed another, known officially as Private Tom Norway.

For a moment, Red Top looked at them and then said, "All right, but cut the love ditties short and give them to me. You know it's against orders for you to mail anything unless it passes through me or one of the 'Coms.'"

As he spoke, the sergeant reached out to take the postcards which had been written.

With evident reluctance, all the men but Hoskins allowed the missives they had been inditing to be taken. But the big private quickly picked up his postcard and shoved it into his blouse.

"I want that card, *you*!" exclaimed the sergeant.

"And you can keep on wanting it before you get it," retorted the lanky private. "This

is a free country and a man still has his rights —even if he is in the army."

Several other members of the battalion had gathered about the seats, attracted by the bits of conversation they had now heard. And at this seeming open defiance of the sergeant, they stood impatient and uncertain, looking to Red Top for their cue. But, if they had hoped defiance of the sergeant would start a rumpus, they were disappointed.

Red Top grinned—and those close to him realized the grin was not one of pleasure—and passed on.

But as he reached the rear of the car, the sergeant nodded toward a corporal, Bud Hawley.

"Keep your eye on Hoskins and his bunch every minute, Bud," he breathed in a voice so low that no one else could hear.

"If one of them leaves that seat, you follow him.

"They won't make a move, I don't believe, until we stop at Springfield for supper.

"But if they do, halt 'em with your gun.

"I'll be here when we draw into Springfield. But I want you to watch to see if Hoskins or any of the others drops anything out of the window."

CHAPTER IV

A DISTURBING NOTE

FOR a moment after he had issued his instructions, the sergeant stood and casually surveyed the car full of American fighting men.

Then, as his presence seemed to be forgotten, he said, in a low voice, "You get me, Corporal, don't you?" and receiving an affirmative nod, passed on into the next car.

But if Private Hoskins and Tom Norway had seen the haste with which Red Top hurried through the other cars of the Bearcat Special until he came to the one in which the officers of the 337th Machine Gun battalion were, they would have been surprised.

Loved by the men for his fairness, and feared by the shirkers, one and all had a wholesome respect for the red-headed sergeant, and hearty were the greetings with which he was hailed.

But to them all he turned a deaf ear, silencing the sincere and eager invitations to join them with a short "I'm busy." As he entered the officers' Pullman, however, he drew up, stiffly.

"Here's the red-head," sneered a young lieu-

tenant by the name of Weismann, who had been inflicted upon the battalion only a week before. "What's he doing in our car? Weren't the orders read to the beggars before we left Camp?"

If looks could have killed, the "shave-tail" would have died on the spot and even he realized that he had put too much faith in his shoulder bars.

Came an instant's pause, and then Captain Hall said:

"What is it, Sergeant? Pray don't let the remarks of anyone make you forget that *you* are a real soldier. What's on your mind?"

"I should like to talk with you, sir," answered Red Top.

"Mystery. Plots, I suppose. He looks like a spy catcher," sneered the lieutenant who had objected to the sergeant's entrance into the officers' car.

But Captain Hall left his seat and went out into the vestibule with Red Top.

"Well?" exclaimed the officer, as they were alone.

"It's Hoskins, sir," replied the sergeant. "You know, the leader of the Huns, as we call him, whom I've told you about."

"What about him?" demanded the Captain of the 337th Machine Gun battalion, frowning.

"He's writing postcards," the sergeant declared.

"Huh! Is that all?" demanded the Captain. "There's no law against that, is there?"

"No, sir. But it's Hoskins," protested Red Top.

"Well, what of it?"

"I don't know, sir. But Hoskins isn't right."

"You mean he's a German?" And Captain Hall searched the face of the intent red-headed man before him.

But Red Top did not flinch.

"I can't prove it," he replied calmly, "but I don't trust him."

Something in the intense earnestness of the red-haired man beside him impressed the Captain and, restraining his desire to reprimand him for bothering him over a seemingly trivial matter, he asked:

"What's Hoskins been doing now? We're only an hour out of camp. I believe you're going crazy, Red Top."

"Maybe, sir. I've always been told everybody is more or less crazy—"

"But Hoskins is writing postcards. When I came on him, sudden like, he shoved his card in his blouse. I told him it was against orders, but he laughed at me."

"And you let him get away with it?"

As the Captain asked this question, more in anger at being disturbed on the journey, he gazed into the eyes of his sergeant, searchingly.

"Yes, sir, I did. I didn't want to spoil the ride for the rest of the boys and I knew you could get that card from Hoskins."

Again Captain Hall gazed into the eyes of his sergeant.

"You really think it's important I do so?" he asked, after an appreciable pause.

"I do," replied Red Top, emphatically.

"But he's had time to destroy anything he's written, if it's incriminating," returned the Captain.

"Begging your pardon, he has not, sir."

"Why?"

"Because I told Corporal Hawley not to let him," answered Red Top quietly.

"I only wish every man in the Army were as careful as you, Sergeant," exclaimed Captain Hall. "We'll go in and talk to Hoskins. It won't do any harm."

As the commander of the 337th Machine Gun battalion entered the car in which the suspected private was, he noticed a group of men about one of the seats and caught the words of one:

"If you throw that card out of the window,

Hoskins, you'll never make another move. Give it to me."

Realizing that something was in the air, Captain Hall hurried forward. Before he reached the scene, however, the recalcitrant private snapped:

"You can put me under arrest if you want, but I'll mail this postcard."

"Not unless I give you permission you won't, Hoskins," exclaimed Captain Hall.

At the sound of the voice of their commander, the other Bearcats who had been attracted to Hoskins' seat by the actions and words of Corporal Hawley dropped back, while the private blanched.

"Give me the postcard," said Captain Hall.

A moment Hoskins hesitated.

"Take it from him, Sergeant," ordered the officer.

Came a sound of ripping cloth and then Red Top exclaimed:

"Here it is, sir."

And as the two men bent over the bit of cardboard, they read:

"We sail July 23rd on the Leviathan. Half are with us. All will be if we can get rid of our sergeant. Officers are cowards. Expect rescue for self and friends. K. Von R."

CHAPTER V

THE POSTCARD DISAPPEARS

AS though unable to believe his eyes, Captain Hall turned from the postcard to Red Top and then back to the card again, reading its message of betrayal and suggested meeting for the second time.

Sensing that something serious was afoot, the other Bearcats riveted their gaze upon their Captain, craning their heads forward that they might not miss any move or lose any word.

That is, all but the Corporal, Bud Hawley.

Mindful of Red Top's words of warning, he, alone of all, kept his eyes upon Hoskins.

The latter, realizing that his treachery had been discovered and knowing full well that the price he would pay for it would be his life, evidently determined to wreak all the damage he could before he should make the payment.

Swiftly, and stealthily, as he thought, he reached for his service revolver. But Corporal Hawley, as though he had read the thoughts passing through the traitor's mind, had anticipated just such a move. And quick as Hoskins was, Bud was quicker.

"No you don't!" he snapped and, reaching across German Jim, dealt Hoskins a blow on the head with his gun that caused the traitor to slump down in his seat, unconscious.

Startled by the words, as they fell on their ears, Captain Hall and the others turned toward the seats of the quartet while Red Top plunged to Bud's side.

"What is it, Corporal?" he demanded, though Hoskins' condition gave him his answer.

"The low down Hun was drawing his gun," Hawley replied, adding, "but I was expecting some such deviltry—and used mine first."

"And effectively," commented Captain Hall, drily.

"Sergeant, get some one to help you bring that—er—fellow back to my car.

"Where are the other postcards?"

"I have them, sir," replied Red Top.

"Good. You can give them to me after we've taken care of Hoskins."

Even as their commander was speaking the sergeant and one of the men he had indicated, Jerry Norris, had taken hold of the limp form of the traitor and were carrying him down the aisle on their way to the officers' Pullman.

As the trio passed through the door of the coach, Captain Hall said to its other occupants,

who stood staring, open-mouthed, seemingly stunned by the startling succession of events:

"The—er—fellow you have just seen carried from this car is a traitor.

"The postcard he wrote gave definite information of our sailing. How he got it, I do not know. It was imparted only to the officers.

"But he had it and if your sergeant had not obtained that card, I mean if it had been mailed, it probably would have cost not only the lives of the full 337th Machine Gun battalion but some 10,000 others.

"You all know the fate that awaits a traitor.

"To think that such a man could be found in my Bearcats. I would have given ten years' pay rather than to have it proved that one of my boys was a German spy. But, thank Heaven, the treacherous hound was foiled."

As he stopped speaking, Captain Hall turned on his heel and walked down the aisle of the coach.

Till he had passed through the door, silence reigned in the car. But once he had disappeared a veritable babel broke loose.

Some of the boys hurried into the coaches ahead to tell the news while others gathered menacingly about the remaining men in the seats from which the traitor had been taken.

"They're all in it!" growled a voice. "Birds

of a feather flock together," he quoted significantly.

"Right you are!" assented another. "Let's shoot 'em all. Better put 'em out of the way before they do any harm.

"I don't mind being 'sent west' by a Hun—if he's in front of me—but I sure do object to being 'put out' by one behind my back!"

Eager assents to this sentiment made the faces of Hoskins' pals show white despite their tan.

But before matters came to a head, Bud Hawley shouted:

"You dubs go back to your seats and sit down. With Red Top away I'm in command of this car.

"I can take care of these three birds without your aid." Then, as the men were reluctant to obey, he added: "You heard what I said. Now go back to your seats. If you don't, I'll put every man-jack of you under arrest and see that you get kitchen duty for the whole time you are in France."

This threat of the hateful kitchen duty detail had the desired effect and, though slowly, the men went back to their seats, but they managed to place themselves so that they could watch Bud and the trio over which he stood guard.

Before Red Top and Norris reached their destination with their burden, Captain Hall overtook them and entered the officers' Pullman ahead of them.

"What was it? False alarm?" sneered the "shavetail," Weismann.

"The false part was there, all right," returned the Captain.

But before he could say more, the entrance of the small detail brought the officers to their feet.

"Put the body in that seat there," ordered Captain Hall, indicating his own section.

And as Red Top and Norris obeyed, he said: "That is all. If I need you, Sergeant, I'll send for you."

Chagrined at being so abruptly dismissed from the case, Red Top exclaimed:

"But a guard, sir? Won't you need a guard for Hoskins? He'll be coming to in—"

"We officers can attend to him, Sergeant," snapped the Captain and quickly Red Top and Norris withdrew.

"Hoskins'll fool that bunch, you see," growled the sergeant as he and his companion passed from the Pullman.

When the officers were alone, they almost smothered Captain Hall with an avalanche of questions.

Briefly he told them of the series of events in the other car and then read the traitorous words of the postcard.

Varied and vehement were the comments of his fellow officers as they realized the import of the intercepted message.

"But how could the fellow have learned the facts?" demanded the first Lieutenant, Don Crawford.

"That's what I don't understand," returned Captain Hall. "Only we officers of the 337th knew it. I—"

"What are you going to do with Hoskins?" interrupted Lt. Weismann.

"Question him when he comes to," answered the Captain.

As he announced his intention, had he, or any of the officers, been watching the traitor with the keenness Corporal Hawley had displayed, they would have seen his eyes open ever so slightly just before the announcement of purpose was made and then close tightly after it was uttered.

For Hoskins, recovering consciousness, had caught the words and instantly decided that the only way for him to escape a grilling examination was to feign unconsciousness.

So well did he play his part that after watching him for several minutes, the officers found

places for themselves close at hand and began to discuss what would probably be his fate at the hands of the court-martial before which he would be brought, and the source of the leak of the orders.

When the train drew into Springfield for supper, Captain Hall summoned Red Top to stand guard over the still apparently unconscious traitor and left the car with the other officers.

Upon their return, the red-headed sergeant announced with emphasis:

"This guy's faking, Captain!

"He's no more unconscious than I am.

"What's the name he signed to that card? Let me take it and have a try at him. I'll make him—"

While Red Top was speaking, Captain Hall had put his hand to his coat pocket for the postcards, then suddenly cried:

"Great guns!—they're gone!"

CHAPTER VI

A SERIES OF STRANGE EVENTS

AS the startled captain made this amazing announcement, his fellow officers crowded about him.

"Where did you have the card?" demanded one of them.

"Right here in this pocket," replied the captain, indicating the pocket on the left breast of his coat.

"Where even the cleverest pickpocket wouldn't be able to get a hand on them without your feeling it," commented Lieut. Crawford. "Strikes me there's something queer about this whole business.

"Here we have a German spy writing confidential information in regard to the sailing of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion, which was only given to the C. O. at Camp Union and to the officers of our unit. It ought not to be very hard to trace the leak."

While his superiors were talking, Red Top, ostensibly listening intently to their words, kept a close but furtive watch over Hoskins.

As the First Lieutenant of the Bearcats

voiced his remark about tracing the source of the leak, the red-haired sergeant noted a flicker of Hoskins' eyelids, a hurried glance at him and then a short, significant look at some one behind Captain Hall.

Instantly, Red Top turned to find out who it was that the traitor was seeking to signal. But quick as he was, the other person was quicker, and the fiery sergeant was disappointed to find that none of the officers was standing behind the captain.

"This is sure some smooth working combination," breathed Red Top, to himself. "But they'll find that there is a red-headed sergeant attached to the 337th Machine Gun Battalion, Patrick Henry McCune by name, who is just as clever as they are—and a wee bit more clever.

"I'll get at the bottom of this deviltry before the Bearcats leave New York—or there'll be a few dead Heinies decorating the dock or messing up the ship."

With this promise to himself, which he wisely kept from either his fellows or his superiors, for the time before sailing was short and the spies were obviously of utmost experience or daring, or they would not have been entrusted on such a desperate mission as traveling with the very company they sought to send to Davy Jones' locker, Red Top decided that

he would dovetail his attention to studying the faces of the officers. And to enable him to carry out his purpose, he moved to a position behind Hoskins, and from which he would be able to observe any one who tried to signal the traitor.

This action had taken but a moment, and had not prevented the sergeant from hearing all that was said.

After Lieut. Crawford had expressed his opinion, the other Second Lieutenant, Ben James, asked:

"Have you lost anything else from your pockets, sir?"

"I don't know. I was so amazed at finding the postcards gone that I haven't thought to ascertain."

Even while speaking, Captain Hall thrust his hand into the pocket on the inside of his coat, and his fellow officers noted the look of blank dismay that spread over his face.

"My bill-fold and two or three personal papers are gone, too," he gasped.

As they heard this announcement, the officers stared at one another in speechless amazement.

It was obviously impossible that a pickpocket could have taken the papers from the inside pocket of the captain's coat without his

knowing it, granting even, that the thief could have taken the postcards from the breast pocket undetected.

For a moment, there was a pregnant silence and then Lieut. Crawford exclaimed:

"There's only one solution to the puzzle that I can suggest."

At the words, all the other officers turned to him, eagerly.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Captain Hall, impatiently.

"Why, that the coat you have on isn't yours."

"Nonsense," snapped the Captain. "Don't you suppose I know my own coat? It fits me, doesn't it?"

"Surely, it fits you right enough," returned the First Lieutenant. "But it may have been substituted for yours. Such things have happened, you know," he added, noting the looks of incredulity that spread over his Captain's and brother officers' faces. "Isn't there something else you had in your pockets, something that you always carry, that would enable you to identify it?"

"Why, yes. My brown cigarette papers," returned his superior. "I always carry them in my breast pocket."

The while he had been speaking, his hand

had sought the papers in the designated pocket —and failed to find them.

"They're gone!" he announced.

"You mean, they never were there," corrected Lieut. Crawford. "To me, the fact that you can't find them proves that the coat isn't yours. Were there any markings on your coat?"

"Not exactly a marking, but the lining was pretty nearly worn through under the breast pocket from the rubbing of the aforementioned cover of the cigarette papers," returned Captain Hall. And without more ado, he removed his coat, only to find that the lining showed no evidence of wear.

"Then that's the answer," declared the First Lieutenant. "Some one substituted this coat for yours."

The statement caused the faces of the officers to become even more grave.

It was evident that one of their number must be an associate of the self-styled Hoskins, who had signed the initials K von R to the tell-tale postcard. The conclusion was not a pleasant one but it was the only logical one. No one had been in the car with them except the discovered traitor, Red Top and Jerry Norris, who helped the sergeant carry the unconscious Hoskins into the officers' Pullman. The

Captain had dismissed the enlisted men and the sergeant had not entered the car again until they were ready to leave it to eat, when he had stood guard over the traitor.

Because of the intense heat, they had all removed their coats when they entrained. The captain had put his on when he went forward with Red Top at the first indication of trouble but had removed it again upon dismissing the sergeant and Norris.

Moreover, the substitution showed that such an event had been foreseen, and the fact that the second coat fitted Captain Hall so well that even he did not realize that it was not the one he usually wore indicated that the German agents were masters at their game and had made careful preparations for their purpose of getting possession of valuable papers. And the officers realized that it had merely been the exigency of the occasion that had caused the substitution to obtain possession of the incriminating postcard.

"But who could have done it?" inquired Captain Hall, after a pause.

At the question, Red Top searched the faces before him, alert to intercept any glance that might be flashed to Hoskins.

But none of the officers looked toward the traitor.

"They certainly know their book," growled the sergeant, to himself. "They are slick ones, and no mistake."

"We all left the car, together, as I remember, when we went out to supper," continued the sorely perplexed captain. "I remember, also, that I stood in the door of the car and waited until Sergeant McCune came to stand guard over our prisoner. So that proves that the substitution was made between the time Hoskins was brought in here and then."

A moment, he stood in silence, gazing steadily from one sober face to another, then murmured:

"It's beyond me. It was bad enough to find one of my Bearcats was a traitor. But it is worse to know that one of my officers is also an agent of the enemy.

"There's only one thing to do, that I can think of—we must wait until Hoskins recovers consciousness and then make him confess."

"By your leave, sir," interposed Red Top, "there's no need of waiting. Hoskins is wide awake now. He's only shamming, as I told you when you came in, sir. And I can prove it," he added, suddenly drawing his bayonet from the scabbard he had attached prior to standing guard over the prisoner, and giving him a quick, vicious jab with it.

Eagerly the others watched. But Hoskins' only reaction was a convulsive jerking of the leg the sergeant had stabbed.

"One more will do it, sir," grinned the sergeant and before his superior could interfere, he had jabbed the bayonet point so far into the traitor's leg, the blood came.

"Quit that, you fool!" yelled Hoskins.

CHAPTER VII

OUTWITTED

AS the traitor realized that he had been forced to put an end to his pretended unconsciousness, his face became livid with anger.

But Red Top only grinned.

For several minutes nothing was said. Then the sergeant demanded of the German agent:

"What's your real name, bo?"

The self-styled Hoskins made no reply, however.

Ere Red Top could repeat his demand, Captain Hall exclaimed:

"I'll attend to the examination, Sergeant."

"Which should not be conducted into so important a matter in the presence of enlisted men," hastily interposed Lieut. Weismann.

At the protest, Red Top and all the officers looked at the man with the gold bars on his shoulders in amazement but none made any reply.

"Crawford, get pencil and paper," instructed Capt. Hall. "I'll just put a few questions to this cur and I want you to write down his answers."

Quickly the second in command of the Battalion obeyed and had just seated himself where he could hear anything that the self-styled Hoskins might say when Lieut. Weismann exclaimed:

"I think this fellow should know that he has some rights. He is in a very serious predicament—"

"Yes, forfeiting your life is serious—that is to some," interposed the First Lieutenant, drily.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Weismann. "I believe in giving every one a fair show. I—"

"That will do, Weismann," snapped Captain Hall, who had been staring at his Second Lieutenant in amazement because of the interruption. "When I need any of your advice, I'll ask for it." Then he paused a moment, and added in a voice that sent the hot blood coursing to the shavetail's face: "If your unwarranted interruption of my questioning this dirty German hound results in closing his mouth, you will find yourself under arrest for aiding and abetting an agent of the enemy."

Abashed at the suddenness of the threat, the Second Lieutenant subsided and the commander of the Bearcats resumed his interrogation.

"Who are you?" he demanded of Hoskins.

Now it is a curious phase of the German spies who have operated in the United States that they are inordinately proud of their work and when any of them have been arrested, they have boastfully made announcement of their identities.

Consequently, it was no surprise to Captain Hall when Hoskins threw his shoulders back and snapped, in as haughty a tone as he could muster:

"I am Karl von Ritz, Captain in the Emperor's Deathshead Dragoons."

"How long have you been in the United States Army?" inquired Captain Hall.

"I was drafted last September."

"And it is now June, make a note of that, Crawford. This spy has been at Camp Union practically ten months. Heaven only knows the information he may have sent out."

At the words, von Ritz smiled.

"How long have you been in the United States?" pursued his inquisitor.

"I landed a week before I was drafted, which was on the 9th of September."

"How did you reach America?" demanded Captain Hall.

But on this point von Ritz was silent.

"Answer me!" thundered the commander of the Bearcats.

But the German agent only smiled.

"How many of your confederates are there left at Union?" asked Captain Hall, realizing that by playing upon the spy's vanity he might obtain information that would be of great value, whereas by straight questioning he would only beget sullen silence.

"Enough," returned von Ritz. "We have a trusted German soldier in all the important units."

"You lie! I don't believe there are many men who are cowardly enough to wish to betray the country under whose flag they have lived and prospered," exclaimed Captain Hall.

"You are welcome to your opinions," retorted the erstwhile officer of the Deathshead Dragoons. "But you must remember that a German soldier thinks only of serving his Emperor in any way he can. Besides, most of our agents have only lived under your flag, like myself, while they have been in your army."

"Do you mean to tell me that agents sent out from Germany could manage to be drafted into the army of the United States?" asked the Captain of the Bearcats.

"You can draw you own conclusions from what I have just told you," sneered von Ritz.

"Where did you land?"

Again a smile was the spy's only answer.

"Have you corrupted one of my officers by your German money?"

Another smile was the only reply.

Angered at being thus balked, the commander of the Bearcats looked at his watch.

"I'll give you just one minute to answer my question—at what United States port did you land?" he barked.

As the seconds ticked off, the group of loyal men watched the face of their prisoner closely.

But he made no reply.

"Once more, I'll give you the chance to talk—or I'll make you!" exclaimed Captain Hall.

The threat, however, only produced a shrug of the shoulders, while an amused smile played over the features of the spy.

"All right—your blood be on your own head," commented the commander of the Bearcats. Then turning to his subordinates, he said, quietly: "We used to have a way of making a renegade Indian who had run amuck from the reservation in North Dakota find his tongue. Perhaps it will help our spy here.

"Sergeant, remove the prisoner's right shoe and stocking."

Quickly Red Top obeyed, a jab from his bayonet putting an end to any resistance on the part of the German agent.

"Here's a box of matches," said Captain

Hall, producing one from the pocket of his breeches. "Just light one after another and hold it under this spy's foot." Then, as Red Top prepared to carry out the command, he said to the traitor, "All you need do to stop this torture is to speak.

"Go ahead, sergeant."

As the flame from the first match touched the bottom of his foot the spy drew back his leg. But the sergeant followed the foot and kept the match under it, lighting another as the first died out.

Ten matches were thus applied while the deepening lines in the spy's face told of the agony he began to suffer.

"Who among my officers was your confederate in the switching of coats on me?" asked the commander of the Bearcats, quietly.

But, as before, the question brought no response.

Steadily the pile of burned match stubs grew on the floor at Red Top's side.

Came a sudden kick of the spy's left foot, catching the red-haired sergeant full under the chin. As he dropped in the aisle, the German agent leaped to his feet and made a dash for the door at the end of the officers' Pullman.

"Get him! Drop him in his tracks before he gets away!" roared Captain Hall.

But the officers had laid their side arms by when they had returned from supper and though each leaped to obtain his gun, the spy was at the end of the car before any of them could get a hand on the butt of his revolver.

And when they were ready to pour a hail of lead into the fugitive, they beheld Lieut. Weismann in the line of fire close to the door.

"Drop, you fool!" yelled the commander of the Bearcats.

Instantly the Second Lieutenant obeyed. But as he sank to the floor the other officers noted that their quarry was not in sight.

Jerking the emergency bell rope in the car, to bring the train to a stop, at the same time Captain Hall shouted: "Go get him, boys!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE MYSTERY OF THE COATS IS EXPLAINED

WITH a rush, the other officers of the Bearcats leaped over the prostrate form of the red-headed sergeant and dashed to the door.

But when they reached the vestibule, they found that the guard step had been pulled up and the door opened.

"Quick work!" grunted Weismann.

His observation went unheeded, for with the slowing down and then the sudden stopping of the train in response to the emergency signal, the men came crowding back from the other cars.

"Each of you officers take searching parties and beat this country round here thoroughly," commanded Captain Hall. "Lively, now. Fortunately there are no woods at hand and the fellow has only had a short start.

"There are no houses hereabouts, so you won't be in danger of hitting any natives. If you see anything move, or that rouses your suspicions, shoot—and shoot to kill."

In a surprisingly short time, the searching

parties were under way. All of the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion were, for the most part, sturdy men who had been born and grown up on farms, so that the task of beating the adjacent country was not an unknown art to them and they performed the task with a will.

Corporal Bud Hawley happened to be assigned to the detail working under Lieutenant Crawford, and as they prowled forward, he asked:

"Where's Red Top?"

"Knocked out by the spy," grunted the First Lieutenant.

"How?"

But the officer had no time to explain any of the details of the amazing affair and instead explaimed:

"The best service you can render Red Top is to get that Hun."

Chance brought the corporal to the edge of a gulch. As he peered cautiously over it, gun extended before him, his head and shoulders were silhoutted against the lesser darkness of the sky.

Crash! barked a gun.

But even as the jet of flame spurted in the darkness, Bud Hawley's service Colt spoke—and in its wake there rose an agonized shriek.

"I've got him! I've got the Hun! First blood for the Bearcats!" yelled the corporal, in an ecstasy of excitement, and with his fellows at his heels he charged down the side of the gulch.

The sound of the firing had reached the ears of the other members of the searching parties, and they made all speed toward the direction whence the shooting came, arriving as Lieutenant Crawford and his corporal were bending over the form of the spy.

"Is it von Ritz?" demanded Captain Hall, forcing his way through the members of the battalion.

"It is, sir, and to Corporal Hawley's credit," returned Lieutenant Crawford.

"Good. Bring the body up to the train. This is better luck than I dared hope for."

With snap and precision surprising under the circumstances, the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion boarded their train once again, and the order was given to continue the journey.

"We've only lost an hour and a half," exclaimed Captain Hall, as he stood with his first lieutenant in the vestibule of his car and felt the wheels begin to move. "Not bad, eh?"

"Surely not, sir, if that is all we have lost," returned Crawford.

"What do you mean?" demanded his superior.

"I mean if von Ritz didn't put Red Top out of commission."

"Great guns! I'd forgotten all about him," and without another word Captain Hall turned on his heel and went into his car.

But the red haired sergeant was nowhere to be seen.

Blankly the two officers gazed at one another.

"What's the answer?" demanded Captain Hall.

"Tell you when I come back," returned Lieutenant Crawford. "I'm going through the train. Probably he is in one of the other cars."

"Hold on, I'll go with you," announced the commander of the Bearcats, and together the two officers made their way into the coach ahead.

Realizing that their men had had far too much excitement already, the officers gave no inkling of their quest, merely looking over the occupants of the cars carefully, in the hope of finding Red Top.

As they entered the vestibule of the fourth car, however, they stopped abruptly, amazed at the sight which met their eyes.

Backed up against the side of the car and

struggling to free himself from the grasp of the powerful hand at his throat, stood Lieutenant Weismann, and shaking him like a rat was Red Top.

But if the two officers were amazed at the sight, they were more so at the words of the sergeant which fell upon their ears.

"You may be able to put that sort of stuff across on the C. O., but you can't on me," snarled Red Top, adding emphasis to his words by a vicious shake of his captive.

"I know the other 'Coms' in this battalion. They've been with us all the time we've been in camp and they're regular guys.

"But I wouldn't trust you as far as I can see you. How you ever got your shoulder bars, I don't know. But I do this—you won't have them very much longer.

"Now, I'll give you your choice—'come clean' and tell me how you came to fall into the clutches of that Hun and how much and what you've done for him.

"If you do this, it may count for you in the court-martial for which you are headed. If you prefer to keep your mouth shut, so much the worse for you.

"Come, speak up!" And the red headed sergeant relaxed his hold on the throat of the

second lieutenant in order that that individual might have a chance to talk.

"I'll break you for this, you—you—" and the officer stopped, unable, in his anger, to find a word which fitted his feeling toward the sergeant.

"Now don't go to calling names," admonished Red Top, with a grin. "Two can play at that game—and the name this man's army will give you isn't one that will sound pleasant in your ears—after I've told what you've done."

"But you can't prove I've done anything," protested the officer.

"But there's such a thing as logic and circumstantial evidence," retorted Red Top. "Just so you'll have a better understanding of the cards I hold, I'll give you a peep at them.

"It was you who worked that substitution of the coats on the C. O. No, don't interrupt," he added, forestalling the attempt of the second lieutenant to deny the accusation. "Your job, for the moment, is to listen to me. When I get done, then'll be your time to talk while I listen.

"I say you changed the coats because you were the only one who had the chance.

"I've noticed while we were in camp that

you were pretty thick with the man we called Hoskins. I've seen you meet him out of camp and I've seen you with him in the city. I also know you've been hitting a pretty lively pace in the cabarets. Maybe you have money of your own, but you don't act to me like a man who has.

"So, there's the first point. You've been getting some money on the side.

"Next point: when Norris and I brought your friend into the Pullman, I noticed the start of surprise you gave. Then, when Hoskins came to, all of a sudden I saw him exchange glances with you. And I remember now that while the others were watching the Hun that you were moving about the car.

"According to my reasoning, it was then that you changed the C. O.'s coat.

"I also remember that when the officers went out to supper that you were the last one to leave the car.

"I take it you did this purposely so that you would have time to drop the postcard you had taken from the C. O.'s coat into the mail box before joining them in the restaurant.

"Then, when I began the experiment of trying to make the Hun speak, I noticed that you had worked round so that you were in line with the door.

"From what I've learned from the others, I feel certain that after the Hun had knocked me out, you got in the line of fire in order to protect his getaway as long as you could, knowing that the rest of our men, being decent, would hesitate to shoot one of their own fellows.

"That's all for the moment. Now you can talk. I'm listening."

"You're crazy, and I'll have you broke for this!" fumed the second lieutenant. "The very idea of your daring to make such charges against me."

"That line of talk isn't making a bit of a hit with me," grinned the sergeant. "I don't care what you think about me. What I want is your answer to the line of reasoning I've laid out."

Ere the officer could reply, Captain Hall stepped forward, closely followed by his first lieutenant.

At their unexpected appearance, Weismann first blanched and then exclaimed:

"Captain Hall, I charge this man with insubordination, with insulting his superior, with—"

"Never mind about the rest, Weismann," interposed the commander of the Bearcats. "I'll attend to that later.

"It so happens that Lieutenant Crawford and I have overheard a good bit of what has passed between you and Sergeant McCune.

"I am interested to hear your reply to the case he has outlined against you. It would seem that if you are innocent that you would have very little trouble in denying all his charges."

Brought to bay, the second lieutenant of the Bearcats gazed a moment at his superior.

Then, suddenly, before any of the others could prevent, he whipped out his revolver and sent a bullet crashing into his brain.

For a moment the officers and sergeant stood aghast.

"Under the circumstances, it is probably the best thing," commented Captain Hall. "Have the body placed with that of von Ritz, Sergeant, and—er—there's no need of letting the rest of the boys know the exact facts.

"Crawford, you'd better go with McCune and search Weismann's clothes, as well as those of von Ritz."

And, turning on his heel, Captain Hall went back to his Pullman, where he briefly reported the events to his subordinates.

CHAPTER IX

ANXIOUS MOMENTS

THE combination of the discovery of a traitor in their ranks and the tragedies that followed so close upon the discovery served as a damper to the spirits of the Bearcats on their trip to the point of embarkation, and it was a silent, subdued battalion that boarded the monster transport.

However, the presence of some nine thousand other Yanks soon drove the unfortunate memories from the minds of the Bearcats, and they proceeded to enjoy themselves as best they could.

Before reaching the port of embarkation, Captain Hall had telegraphed his report of the incidents, and when the battalion arrived at its seaboard destination, another second lieutenant, Herbert Adams, was waiting to fill Weismann's duties.

To the boys from the Middle West, the bustle of the great city which lay across the river from them was a revelation, and they lined the rails of their transport every possible moment, watching the busy traffic on the water.

As night fell, bringing into play the myriads of lights in the towering office buildings, they gazed enthralled, reluctant to leave the fairy-like scene when taps sent them to their berths.

But despite the strangeness of their surroundings, the fatigue of their long trip in the hot, uncomfortable railway coaches told and they were soon asleep, and so soundly that they did not awaken when, early in the morning, the huge transport got under way.

Reveille at last brought them to their feet, and as the thousand of keen, eager faced youngsters crowded upon the decks, they found themselves plowing through the waters of the channel, well on their way to sea.

"Setting up" drill, under the vibrations of the mighty ship, was a source of amusement to them, accustomed as they were to going through the limbering-up exercises with the firm earth under their feet.

On the day before, the Yanks had inspected the mysteries of the camouflage of the transport, and on this second day those who were not on special detail passed as much of the time as they could watching the crews of the guns at drill.

Toward mid-afternoon, the huge transport picked up the other ships in the convoy and, with sharp-nosed torpedo boats ahead of and

behind them and on their flanks, the twenty-odd ships, all laden with troops and munitions of war, sped forward, the entire group sponsored by mighty battleships and cruisers.

But when the darkness of night descended and no lights were permitted on the decks or in below, save where they could be carefully hidden, as at the gangways—for it was too hot to permit of the portholes being closed,—the men, for the first time, seemed to realize that they were embarked on an enterprise the successful culmination of which depended on the efficacy of their protectors to keep them from falling victim to the deadly torpedoes of a submarine. And the realization sobered them.

The imminence of the hidden danger was even more strongly brought home to them, when officers and sergeants passed among them, spreading the word that a boat drill might be sprung on them at any time, and bidding them remember the instructions that had been given them during the day when each man had been assigned to a boat or raft and had had his life preserver doled out to him with admonition to keep it by him night and day.

The quarters of the Bearcats were directly amidship and as the evening wore on, the members of the battalion gathered and sat them-

selves wherever they could, talking in subdued tones.

"Everybody here?" demanded Red Top, suddenly appearing among them. And as the presence of the complete enlisted personnel of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion was made known to him, he exclaimed: "Good. According to the dope of the C. O., we're due for an 'abandon ship' drill some time tonight.

"Now, the Bearcats have a reputation to maintain. As I get it from the C. O., some of the other camps have heard of us. There's a bunch from up North who have referred to us as the Kittens.

"So, it's up to us to prove to the world that we're Bearcats and not Kittens. However, we'll have plenty of chance to attend to that before we touch France. I've an idea some of the other officers have twitted the C. O. and the Loots, and that they've put up a bit of money that we can put it all over any of the other battalions and companies.

"But what I want to say is, that I want you all to put some life into things when the 'abandon ship' alarm sounds. Remember, it will be three clangs of a gong. They can't make too much noise for fear some of the Heinies may be hanging 'round on the top of the ocean and, hearing us, send a few torpedoes our way.

"I shouldn't be surprised if there would be extra smokes for the battalion that makes the best showing in getting to the boat stations.

"So, you fellows remember, I'm counting on you to hold up the hands of the C. O. and the Loots. If any of you fall down, just get it into your heads that you will have a little score to settle with Red Top tomorrow."

"Never you worry about us, Serg.," exclaimed one of the men. "We'll deliver the goods." And the murmur of approval of the words that came from the others caused the red headed sergeant to smile.

But taps came without any indication of the boat drill, and many of the men were sound asleep when the sudden crash of a gun roared out upon the stillness of the night, followed quickly by three others.

Instantly, the Bearcats, to a man, were out of their bunks.

"Get your preservers on, lively now!" rang out the voice of Red Top.

As the men obeyed, the sound of feet rushing about on the decks told them that the whole ship was awake.

"Sergeant McCune?" called a voice from the darkness that all recognized as belonging to their captain.

"Here, sir," returned Red Top.

"Have your men get into their life preservers and stand by their boats."

"They're already in their preservers, sir," returned the sergeant.

"Good. Then send them to their boats."

Quickly Red Top snapped out his commands and with easy, rhythmic step, as though they were going on a practice march instead, perhaps, of to entrusting themselves to the mercies of the sea in small boats and rafts, the Bearcats marched to their boats. Arrived on deck, they marveled at the sight about them.

From mastheads lights were twinkling, as messages were flashed back and forth, and wide swaths of light from the searchlights of torpedo boats and cruisers alternated in sweeping the surface of the water and cutting the heavens with their signals.

Arrived at their stations, the commander of the Bearcats gave the order for them to stand at ease.

Suddenly, the members of the battalion were aware that their transport was zigzagging in a most crazy manner, now plunging ahead in one direction, then swerving to another, with a suddenness that caused the mighty vessel to quiver like a leaf as she answered to her helm.

As minute after minute went by, stretching

to hours, and no command came to abandon their stations, the men made themselves as comfortable as they could with their life preservers on, and squatted or lay upon the decks at their boats.

Of a sudden there rang from the amidship crow's nest, rigged on a temporary masthead, the shout:

"Torpedo coming amidships, on the port side!"

With a leap, every man was on his feet, crowding the rail, in total forgetfulness of his drill station, in an effort to catch sight of the deadly missile that might send them all to eternity—if it should strike their ship.

Tensely the eyes of the men on the rail searched the waters and at last they were able to pick out a white wake, visible through the phosphorescence of the waters.

Fascinated, they watched, all unmindful of their danger, till the transport gave a lurch to port that threw many of the Yanks from their feet, so sudden was it.

"Change in our course," exclaimed Captain Hall, who had returned to his battalion. "Steady now, boys. We're in a sure tight fix. Evidently that lurch proves that the skipper of this ship has decided that the only way he can escape that torpedo is by swinging head on

to it so that the thing may go by instead of striking us full amidships.

"It is obviously a desperate chance. But I want you fellows, if we can't dodge the thing, to give a good account of yourselves. No rush, no panic.

"Remember, you're Camp Union's Bearcats—and we want the Camp to be proud of us!"

Nobly the huge mass of steel responded to her helm and to the powerful blades of her propellers as they churned the sea in frantic effort to drive the great ship out of the line of danger. But though she seemed fairly to leap ahead, under forced draught, the thin white trail came ever nearer and nearer.

"We'll never clear it," exclaimed a voice.

"Shut up, you fool!" snapped Captain Hall. "Another—"

But his words were lost in the crash of a three-pounder from the forward deck.

"They're shooting at the torpedo," ran through the transport in a whisper.

And the men all knew, without being told, that their plight was indeed desperate when the ship's officers would resort to the almost impossible expedient of hitting an onrushing torpedo in the night in an effort to explode it before the deadly missile found its mark.

Scarcely had the report of the forward three-pounder died away than the stern gun spoke.

For the next few minutes, though to the nerve-strained Yanks it seemed years, the two guns spat flame as they poured shell after shell at the torpedo.

But just when it seemed to the Bearcats that they would crack under the strain, the voice from the crow's nest called out:

"Torpedo passed astern!"

CHAPTER X

THE RACE FOR PORT

THE cries of relief that rose from the throats of the tense-faced Yanks as the words of the lookout in the crow's nest were passed from deck to deck sounded like the sigh of some prehistoric monster. And then silence settled down upon the huge transport once more.

Those who happened to be near the receiving room of the radio station quickly learned that new orders for the Leviathan had been flashed from the flagship of the convoying squadron and word of the fact was quietly passed throughout the ship. But it was not until morning, which finally dawned after the never-to-be-forgotten strain of the night, that their purport was understood by officers and men alike.

As the sun rose, the forms of the other ships which had been visible on either side, ahead and astern when darkness had fallen the evening before, were no longer to be seen.

Captain Hall and his subordinates were leaning against the rail with the members of their battalion, for the experience of the night

attack had caused the officers of every branch of the service to remain with their units, discussing the change.

"While I'm not sure, of course," said the commander of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion, "it looks to me as if we were 'going it on our own.'"

"Probably," agreed the first lieutenant. "The Huns know that the Leviathan is carrying the biggest load of Yanks that have crossed so far and naturally it would please them mightily if they could send us to Davy Jones' locker.

"Of course, that information that von Ritz put on his postcard has reached the enemy. I shouldn't be surprised if the commanders of the Hun submarines had been promised a pretty batch of Iron Crosses if they succeed in doing away with us."

"Sure," asserted his superior. "But if we have the luck we had last night, their whole fleet of submarines won't be able to catch us. I—"

"Look there, off the port bow," suddenly interrupted Red Top.

Quickly all eyes were turned in the direction indicated.

Over the surface of the sea came a huge pall of black smoke.

"Is it destroyers, or what?" demanded one of the men.

"It's a smoke cloud from one or more of our convoys," returned Captain Hall.

"And there's another astern," chimed in Red Top, excitedly.

"And probably another on the starboard side," said Lieutenant Crawford. "It's evident that our convoys have decided to save us at all hazards.

The surmises of the officers were correct, although no word was passed about the ship officially.

After the all but successful night attack upon the monster transport, laden with its ten thousand human lives and ton upon ton of war munitions, the commander of the convoying war craft had wirelessed the captain of the Leviathan that he would detail four torpedo boat destroyers and a fast cruiser to the transport and instructed him to make port with all possible speed. And the smoke screen was a part of the protection afforded by the torpedo boat destroyers.

But the anxiety of the men in command did not in any way interfere with the routine on the ship.

Indeed, were it not for the fact that the men were told to carry their life preservers about

with them wherever they went, no one would have known that any moment might send them flying to the boats and life rafts.

Setting-up drill was held as usual, and then the crews of the deck guns were put through their drills.

Toward noon there came a violent series of wigwagging from the lookouts in the bow.

Again the mighty transport swerved in her course and, almost before the doughboys could recover their footing, the forward deck gun barked, followed an instant later by the one on the stern.

Came a rush of men from the port to the starboard side of the ship, so sudden that the Leviathan listed perceptibly, so eager were the soldiers to get a glimpse of the cause of the firing.

Before more than a few of the foremost could do so, however, sharp commands rang out. "Back to the port side, you men quartered there!" from the throats of many officers.

And despite their curiosity, the men obeyed.

But some of them had been among the lucky ones who had caught a glimpse of the cause of the firing.

Eagerly their fellows crowded about them and plied them with questions.

"It looked to me like the sawed-off end of

the turn of a drain pipe," exclaimed one. "Not much bigger and it only stuck up about a couple of feet."

"That was a periscope of a submarine," cried another.

"Sure, I know it was," retorted the first. "I could have told you that. I thought you wanted to know what it looked like."

"Did they hit it?" inquired another.

"I don't know. But I do that it ducked out of sight mighty quick," returned the informant.

"Well, they sure are bold, sticking their nose right up alongside of us almost," declared Bud Hawley. "The devils have nerve, if nothing else."

Murmurs of assent and various epithets were hurled at the hidden danger that pursued them so relentlessly.

"It just goes to show how doggone keen they are to get us," snorted Red Top. "Oh, if I'd only got that card away from the dirty spy *and kept it myself!*"

"Huh, a lot of good that would have done," sneered German Jim. "Don't you suppose that other people knew about our sailing beside Karl?"

"Undoubtedly," exclaimed Captain Hall. "But our convoy is able to care for all the U-boats that come our way. Just feel that!"

For as he had been speaking there came a mighty quiver of the transport.

"We're hit!" cried a few voices, in chorus.

"Silence!" bellowed Captain Hall, noting the effect the words were having upon some of the men, whose faces had gone white as they strove frantically to get into their life preservers.

"That was only a depth bomb," he added.

"How do you know?" demanded German Jim.

"Because if it had been a torpedo striking us, you'd have seen a mass of iron and beams flying in the air," quietly returned the battalion commander.

"What good will that do?" demanded another Yank.

"It will give the Huns in any U-boat within a radius of a hundred yards a mighty uncomfortable time of it for a few minutes, if it doesn't finish them entirely," returned the captain.

And even as he finished speaking, a mighty shout came from the starboard side of the transport.

"Oil! Oil!" came the cries.

"That means one U-boat is put out of the way," explained Captain Hall. "If a depth bomb does its work, the fact is known by the

oil which rises from the submarine to the surface."

But his explanation was lost in the mighty cheers which rose from all parts of the transport, and in which his own men joined with a will.

When the excitement had died, however, the keen observers among the battalion noticed that a destroyer was steaming along much closer to the transport than it had been before and another was reported in a relative position on the other side of the ship.

Throughout the day, though the men kept eager watch, no other periscope was sighted.

With the coming of night, the tension increased again, but nothing happened to disturb the peace of the transport.

And so night followed day for the remainder of the seven days of the voyage.

Toward noon of the seventh day, Captain Hall exclaimed:

"This afternoon we will pick up the British convoy. We are now going through the most dangerous zone of the trip. If our luck holds, however, we shall be in the channel by dark and when we wake up we shall be in the French port that is our destination."

The words brought cheers from the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion, and they

proceeded promptly to forget all about the danger they were in and started to practice the bits of French they had been able to pick up.

"Aw, shut up," growled the red headed sergeant at the end of a couple of hours of wild jabberings. "No Frenchmen could ever understand any of the lingo you fellows are slinging. Take my advice and when you run into one of them speak United States. It's dollars to doughnuts he'll understand it a heap sight better than he would this stuff you wisenheimers call French."

But the protest of Red Top was without avail and the chatter was kept up till the deep boom of a gun interrupted.

It came from far astern and those who were on the rail were fortunate enough to see a column of water spout high in the air many hundred yards behind them.

"Taking a parting shot at us, so to speak," grinned Lieutenant Crawford, who chanced to be at the rail. "That's evidently another U-boat making a desperate attempt to do some damage to us before we pass into the safety zone."

"Must be plumb foolish," declared Jerry Norris, in disgust. "Even Red Top, here, poor at judging range as he is, would know that we were a mile or so too far away to hit."

"That's all right about my judging range," retorted the red headed sergeant. "I only wish those Huns would be as far out in the barrage they throw at us the first time."

"I'll say you're right, serg.," exclaimed Bud Hawley. "Look there, one of the destroyer's turning about to give the Hun a once over."

This announcement took the attention of the members of the battalion and they gazed after the fast rushing steel knife as it leaped in search of the submarine that had fired the shot.

And they were still watching when a shout from the bow told of the meeting with the British men-of-war.

Twilight, however, settled over the sea before the Yanks had a chance to observe the doughty sea-fighters at close range.

Suddenly word spread about the transport that the danger zone had been passed and that nothing hostile stood in the way of their reaching the French port unharmed.

For a moment there was silence, then the Bearcats shouted in chorus:

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here!"

And the refrain was taken up and bandied from one end of the transport to another and from deck to deck.

CHAPTER XI

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

DESPITE the excitement incident to catching their first glimpse of the land they were to deliver from the merciless ruin and ravage of the conscienceless Huns, the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion slept soundly. Yet the cessation of the vibration from the transport's propellers, as she anchored preparatory to docking in daylight, brought all of them to their feet in a hurry.

But though they strained their eyes, there was nothing they could distinguish beyond the dark, vague outline of land ahead of them.

Not a light was visible, for the German airships and bombing Zeppelins were too fond of cruising about in the blackness of night and dropping their deadly missiles on sleeping women and children.

The doughboys, however, were too keen to set foot on shore to return to their bunks, and the hour before dawn soon passed.

As blackness of the night gave way first to the green and then the purple of dawn, they packed the rails of the Leviathan.

In silence they surveyed the rows of quaint stone houses with their brilliant tiled roofs.

"Looks more like a Christmas card than a place where folks live," grunted Jerry Norris.

But further comment was abandoned in the interest that attended the docking for the transport had again got under way and was slowly approaching the great stone quay at which the ten thousand Yanks were to debark.

As the proud folds of Old Glory were thrown to the breeze, a cheer rose from the throats of the men on the Leviathan so mighty in volume that it carried to the hills of the town, rousing the men, women and children, who hastened forth to greet the first of the long-hoped-for allies from the United States.

Already the quay was alive with officers and poilus in their horizon blue uniforms and groups of stolid faced men and boys in gray.

"Who are the wooden men?" asked Bud Hawley, pointing to one of the groups of the latter, standing sullenly staring at the great transport.

"Those are German prisoners," exclaimed Captain Hall. "Because of the shortage of men, the French use them to help unload the transports and munition ships."

Intently and interestedly the Bearcats stared at their enemies.

"Huh, do you mean to tell me those wooden Indians have been able to push the French and British all over Belgium and a good part of France?" demanded Jerry Norris.

"You won't think that they're wooden Indians when they come over the top into your trenches," exclaimed German Jim. "You'll—"

"That reminds me," suddenly interrupted Captain Hall. "Sergeant, as soon as we have debarked, you will place this man under arrest and take him to the guard house. I will have him turned over to the French officers."

At the words, German Jim leveled such a look of fury at the commander of the Bearcats that several of the other men stepped between them, but Captain Hall turned on his heel, paying no further attention to the man who had been the friend of von Ritz.

But as he walked away, Red Top gave vent to his feelings.

"This is a cheerful mess!" he growled, shaking his fist at German Jim. "For two cents I'd knock your block off. Here we just get a chance to set our feet on French soil and we've got to take you to the hoosegow, instead of watching the fun. But you won't spoil any more of my fun than I can help. I'll turn you

over to the Frenchies—and then 'good night' for yours. I hope they'll shoot you at sunrise."

The commands to "Fall in" which rang through the transport at that moment put an end to the red headed sergeant's expression of his feelings and prevented any retort from the disgraced member of the Bearcats.

With scarcely a jar, the great transport ran alongside the dock and was made fast.

From the quay rose a series of sharp, strange commands, and the Yanks who were fortunate enough to be standing near the rail saw the stolid, sullen Hun prisoners suddenly come to life, seize the great gang planks and raise them to the transport.

Came more orders from the officers on the Leviathan—and then the first of the ten thousand Yanks who had come three thousand miles to fight for the sanctity of their homes and their womenfolk marched proudly down from the huge steel ship to the quay.

As the hordes of khaki clad men poured forth from the seven gangplanks, a mighty cheer rose from the throats of the French soldiers and from the townsfolk who had gathered at the quay.

Forgetful of discipline, the Yanks returned the cheers with a will as they marched to the various stations assigned them.

As the Bearcats halted, Red Top sought out his prisoner.

"Come along lively, now!" he hissed, and poking the man with his bayonet, he took him to where Captain Hall was in earnest conversation with a couple of French officers.

As the two reached them, the Frenchmen grinned. Then one of them turned to a poilu, rattled off a few commands and the blue-clad trooper seized German Jim by the shoulder and yanked him away, unmindful of his efforts to balk.

Under ordinary conditions, the fate of German Jim would have been the cause of much speculation among his former mess companions, but there was too much to be seen and heard for them to pay more than cursory attention to him and soon he was entirely forgotten.

When all the available space on the quay was alive with the men in khaki, more commands rang out and, with their officers at their head, they swung out onto the street which led to where a long line of cars was standing, with a diminutive engine, puffing as though in anticipation of its task in hauling so much human freight.

Arrived beside the cars, the order was given to break ranks and entrain.

On the side of each car were chalked the words "Hommes, 100; Chevaux, 25" (men, 100; horses, 25).

"For the love of Mike, do they expect us to travel in cattle cars?" demanded one of the Bearcats, surveying the coaches in disgust.

"Before the end of a week, you'll be wishing you had even a cattle car to travel in," exclaimed Red Top. "Shut up your growling and get aboard—or you'll get what German Jim got. You're in the war now, my bucko, and you'll soon be under French command. I'm told we're to be brigaded with the French to learn the ropes.

"And the first thing you want to get into those ivory domes of yours, and this applies to all of you Bearcats, is that orders is orders. You gets your orders and you obeys 'em. If you don't, you gets what a Heinie would give you if he came upon you from behind when you wasn't looking. Hop in them cars."

"War sure is fierce," exclaimed Jerry Norris, with a grin, as the sergeant's tirade ceased. "Just to think that our Red Top should relapse in such ungrammatical language. By the time we get to the front, he'll be talking so we'll need an interpreter to understand him."

"Perhaps you can understand this, then, without the aid of an interpreter," snapped

Red Top, as he prodded Jerry with his bayonet, causing him to make a leap that landed him sprawling on the floor of the cattle car, to the great delight of his fellows.

"Serves you right for joshing a sergeant," grinned one of the others; "a non-com in France is almost as important as a shavetail. By the way do the coms ride in this kind of cars, too."

"You're sure right they do," asserted Red Top. "There's no frills in the French Army."

With such banter and chaff, the Bearcats whiled away the time until the twenty cars that made up the train were filled.

Came a shrill whistling, a prodigious puffing from the tiny engine, and, amid shouts of "Vive L'Americains" from the assembled townsfolk, the train crawled away to the camp where the Yanks were to be put through an intensive preparation for fighting the Huns.

CHAPTER XII

STRENUOUS WORK

THE novelty of the trip, the quaintness of the villages through which they passed, with the thatched roofs, the crude farming implements, the cumbersome old two-wheeled carts and the picturesqueness of the costumes of the peasant women—for there was never a young man to be seen, in fact, seldom any males except those too old or too youthful to fight—caused the Bearcats to forget the closeness of their quarters.

Even the rain, which began to fall with the persistence of French rain, failed to dampen their spirits and they took turns standing at the open doors that they might see the country through which they were passing.

Word seemed to have traveled ahead of the train that the Americans were coming, for at every station an excited group of women and children were on hand to throw flowers into the cars and exchange words of welcome and good luck.

Some of the Bearcats endeavored to make use of the French they thought they had ac-

quired. But the only response they received were smiles and shrugs of pretty shoulders—which, on the whole, seemed to satisfy them.

When mess time arrived and no food was forthcoming, for a few minutes the men gave vent to their feelings.

"You might just as well save your breath," admonished Red Top. "There's no dining car attached to this royal special and they didn't issue us any food rations at the quay. So, unless you want to eat your words, there's no use grumbling.

"Besides, you might as well get used to going without chow now as later. You'll be lucky if you only miss one meal when you get into the trenches with the Heinies throwing high explosive shells and other of their delicate little attentions."

"How long does this pilgrimage last, anyhow?" demanded Jerry. "Are they giving us a joy ride all over France? We've been traveling for four hours now."

"Judging from the speed we're making, we won't get to camp before the war's over," returned Bud Hawley. "I used to brake on a through freight before I got pulled into this bunch because they wanted a real man in it, and I'll tell the world we aren't making fifteen miles an hour."

"It's a hundred and ten miles from where we landed to the camp," replied Red Top. "I know because Captain Hall told me."

"Then I say, if we want to get there, we'd better get out and walk," exclaimed Jerry.

But at last, after what had seemed to them as a longer time than they had passed in crossing the Atlantic, the train came to a stop.

"Engine's going to sleep for the night, I suppose," opined Bud, peering out into darkness.

Ere any of the Bearcats could think of a fitting retort, the voice of Captain Hall rang out.

"Turn your men out, sergeant," he commanded. "Our quarters are on the other side of camp. Lively now."

Too surprised to think they had reached their destination, for in the inky blackness they could see nothing about them, to make any comment, the Bearcats clambered from the car, shouldered their equipment and plunged through the mud in the wake of their officers.

As they stumbled and slipped along, many and varied were their comments, but they took good care not to voice them aloud.

At last came the word to halt.

"Here is where your battalion is billeted,

Captain Hall," said a voice strange to the Bearcats. "Better have your men turn right in so they'll be fit for beginning their work in the morning. Good night."

Quickly the commander of the Bearcats gave the command to pitch tents.

"What do they think we are, eels, that we can live in this mud," growled a voice.

But with true philosophy, the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion unslung their "pup" tents.

"Pitch your tents anywhere you can find a dry spot for tonight," ordered Captain Hall. "In the morning, we'll lay out our streets and make our camp shipshape."

"Can we use lanterns, sir?" asked Bud.

"No, indeed," returned his commander. "All lights above ground are forbidden, unless they are concealed. Too many Hun planes and Zeppelins looking for us, even if it is raining.

"The Heinies know we've arrived and nothing would give them greater joy, I fancy, than to drop a few tons of bombs, if they could locate this training camp."

As best they could, the Bearcats set up their shelter tents and soon, despite the mud and rain, were slumbering as peacefully as though

they were back in Camp Union instead of within a hundred miles of the battle line.

With the sounding of reveille, the men turned out from their tents only to find that they faced another rainy day. But they were given little time to think of the weather.

As they dressed, a field kitchen wheeled into place and in due course they were gorging themselves on bully beef and coffee.

After chow, they were put at laying out their company streets and before they had completed the task an orderly brought instructions to Captain Hall to march his men to trenches for their first lesson in repelling trench attacks.

The camp in which the Bearcats were to receive their intensive training was a combat divisional one, embracing more than 28,000 men.

For the American Army Division was about twice the size of the French or British Divisions.

When the General Staff arrived in France, consultations were held with the allied commanders and, at their suggestion, the change in numbers was made.

Thus the personnel of the American combat divisions consisted of four regiments of infantry, of 3,000 men each. Each regiment was divided into three battalions of 1,000 men, and

each battalion into four companies of 250 each. In addition, there was an artillery brigade of three regiments, a regiment of engineers, a machine gun battalion, a trench mortar battery, a signal battalion, military police, wagon train, the headquarters staff and a medical unit.

The army corps was composed of six divisions, four combat, one replacement and one depot, with two regiments of cavalry.

In turn, each army consisted of from three to five corps.

Thus, with four divisions fully trained, a corps on a sector would have two divisions on the battle line and two in reserve, the loss being filled from the replacement and depot divisions.

The plan adopted for the intensive training contemplated a month for a division to become acclimated with drills by battalion and smaller units followed by a month in the trenches on some quiet sector by battalions and then a third month out of the trenches for training in full divisional maneuvers.

To make the training as practical as possible, British and French officers were detailed to each battalion to take charge of the instruction.

At the same time, three enormous schools

for the training of American officers were established, one at Langres, for the training of staff work, one at Saumur, for the artillery training and one at Issoudun for aviators. Other schools were also established for the training of men chosen from the ranks who were deemed fit to hold commissions.

Before the Bearcats had been in camp a week, however, word came from the front that the Germans were driving down through Picardy, sweeping the British aside with apparent ease.

With grave faces, the officers went about driving their men harder and harder. It was drill, drill, drill, from morning till night and many times from night till morning. For it was necessary that they should be able to fight in the dark as well as in the light.

But the Bearcats had been well trained back in Camp Union and it was only necessary for the French and British officers to teach them the fine points of the game. And so apt were they as pupils that their fame soon spread throughout the division.

On the night to a week of their arrival at the camp it was raining as usual and most of the Bearcats had turned in without waiting for taps when Captain Hall appeared at Red Top's tent.

"Turn your men right out, sergeant," he commanded, paying no attention to the looks of surprise his coming had caused. "The Big Man thinks the Bearcats are needed to stop the Huns.

"Anyhow, our orders are to be under the way at 10 o'clock. It's 9:45 now. General Hanks didn't think we could do it. The orders only just came. But I know we can. That's why I came down here instead of sending for you.

"Remember, you got less than fifteen minutes to strike camp. But the Bearcats have the chance to win everlasting glory. So go to it."

Quickly the necessary commands were given and in addition Red Top and Bud Hawley went about among the men, telling them of the opportunity that had come to them.

"What do we do, march?" demanded Jerry, as the battalion was standing at ease after having struck camp.

"Not this time," exclaimed Captain Hall, who had overheard the remark. "We go by motor transport. Here come the lorries now."

And even as he spoke, twenty of the huge trucks chugged into the company street and stopped.

"Into 'em, quick!" snapped Red Top.

With a will, the men obeyed and as the hands of Captain Hall's watch pointed to 10 o'clock, the Bearcats started for the battle sector where fate decreed that they would carve their name in the Hun hordes.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE MARCH

THROUGHOUT the hours of the long, chill night, the men of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion bumped and slewed and pitched and tossed in the on-speeding lorries.

"This is worse than crossing the ocean because there is more of it, I mean that you feel the pitching and tossing more," exclaimed one after a particularly protracted bit of rough going when it had seemed to the men in the transports that they were on the point of turning turtle each moment.

"Hey, you driver, why don't you keep in the road?" called Bud.

"Road?" snorted the man at the wheel. "Guess you fellows ain't been in this land of mud and ruts very long. If you had, you'd know that the open field is smoother than one of their pesky little roads."

"Well, if you puts your lights on, you might be able to see more of the humps and ruts to hit," retorted the corporal.

"And give some sneaking Boche plane a chance to drop a bomb? Say, but you are

green. How long you been over here, or don't you know you're really here?"

"We landed just a week ago," replied Red Top.

"Aw, quit your kidding. Can't you answer a decent question?"

"And that's just what I did," returned the red headed sergeant. "I tell you it was just a week ago that we steamed into port."

"And you're on your way to the front in seven days?"

"Uhuh."

"Well, you must be some great bunch, or else the C. O.'s gone plumb daffy," exclaimed the driver.

"You had it right the first time," retorted Red Top, with a grin whose breadth was lost in the darkness. "Just so that you may understand the singular honor that a kind fate has laid upon you, I'll tell you for your own information that the men you are bumping about so scandalously are the Bearcats."

The only response to this bit of sarcasm was a disgusted grunt. But the men noticed that the going seemed to get even rougher than it had been before.

"The honor must have gone to the driver's head," snickered Bud.

"You're wrong there," retorted Red Top.

"He hasn't got any head, and you can't expect a piece of ivory to have any feelings."

With such badinage, the Bearcats whiled away the night.

Toward dawn, they were suddenly surprised to feel that the going was easier.

Peering out, Bud exclaimed:

"We must have struck the main transport road. Holy cats, look at the birds we are passing."

Thus adjured, the others crowded to the open rear of the lorrie and looked out.

They were indeed on the main route from the Picardy battle front to the supply station of the sector.

In a continuous stream, men of all shades of color, and clad in all sorts of clothing, few of the rags could be called uniforms, were passing to the rear on their way to the rest camp.

The men were of all ages and of all races. Here was one whose blonde hair was almost hidden under the steel-blue soup-tureen that was called a helmet. Beside him trudged a sawed-off bit of a man, with face the color of mahogany, cheeks sunken, eyes glowing like coals of fire in deep sockets.

Muskets, with the long, keen-edged bayonets attached, trundle over their shoulders, while their equipment hangs to their backs seemingly

as best it can. And every last one of them is caked with mud, from toe to head.

The comments that rise to the lips of the Bearcats as they watch these veterans file by in endless stream are never uttered. Despite their unkempt appearance, they gave good accounts of themselves at the front. They have been in hand-to-hand struggle with the fiendish Huns and they have escaped the cold steel of their bayonets, or the deadly rain of shrapnel and high explosive shells. And they have been face to face with the most soulless creatures ever born from man or woman for a sufficient length of time to earn them respite and rest in such place that they may forget, if they can, the awful scenes they have witnessed and have other things to think about save the killing of devils in human form.

As the Bearcats realize these facts, they gaze with renewed interest upon the men they pass, frequently bursting into cheers as they pass some bullet-riddled battle flag.

And the cheers arouse the poilus from their seeming lethargy.

One glimpse of the keen, eager faces tell them that the men in the lorries are from the land afar across the sea, and occasionally they shout "Vive L'Americains!"

But for the most part the horror of trench

life is still upon them and they trudge dazedly on.

In striking contrast to the drab men in blue, there suddenly pass a file of men in greenish-yellow overcoats, with crescents upon their helmets, their faces, or as much of them as shows above their thick beard, yellow, brown or a deep red.

Every now and then among them is a giant of coal black hue. And behind them floats a red flag with a green hand in the center.

"Who are they?" whispered Jerry, as the first of them filed by.

"They're the Moroccan Division," replied Lieut. Crawford. "Les Africains, the French call them. To look at them now you'd think they were easy-going sorts. But I've heard that when they go over the top even the Huns themselves aren't any more hellish.

"They show no mercy—and they ask none. For that reason the trench commanders rejoice especially when they receive a detail for duty. They know that a few Huns, at least, will be made to pay for the unspeakable crimes they have committed against the women and children of Belgium and France."

With this explanation the Bearcats stared in open-mouthed admiration at the many hued fighters.

But suddenly their attention was diverted by the staccato barking from overhead.

"Airplane," explained the First Lieutenant. But though the Bearcats strained their eyes, they were unable to catch a glimpse of the mechanical bird so high above them as to be invisible, yet that could pick out their winding train of lorries through binoculars.

All at once the lorries stopped.

"Chow," explained Lieut. Crawford, looking at his watch. "Hurry now, and eat because we want to get under way again as soon as possible."

No second urging did the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion need and, rubbing sorely stretched muscles, they hopped and stumbled to the muddy ground, unslung their mess plates and cups and formed in line to pass beside the field kitchen and receive their rations.

"Hey you, I want my coffee in that cup, not that plate," exclaimed Jerry to the cookee.

"Better take your coffee in the plate," grinned the server. "But don't argue about it. You're blocking the line. On your way, bo, on your way. Give place to better than you'll ever be."

"You're a liar," retorted the fiery-tempered

Jerry. But before the two could come to blows the militant Bearcat had been good naturedly pushed out of line by the man behind him.

"Say, what is this stuff?" he asked of Red Top, staring in perplexity at the unsavory looking mess he had in his tin cup.

"That, by bucko, is 'slum.'" Then, bowing with mock solemnity to the cup, he continued: "Slum, meet Mr. Jerry Norris, high private in the Immortal Bearcats, otherwise known as the 337th Machine Gun Battalion. Mr. Norris, meet Mr. Slum."

The bit of by-play had caught the attention of some of the British Tommies, who were, like the Africans, on their way back from the front.

"But don't look too long at Mr. Slum, me bye," exclaimed one of them. "When you get to the trenches you'll see so bally much of the poison, that is, if you see anything to eat at all, which is more than unlikely, you'll get so bloomin' sick of the stuff you'll feel the Heinies must of invented the mess. Bah, I'd rather eat dirt."

But despite this prediction the Bearcats were too hungry not to make an attempt to eat the concoction, but with many of them that was as far as they got.

Chow over, the Bearcats are allowed a few minutes to stroll about and get the stiffness out

of their legs, and then the command to entrain again was passed along.

Willingly and eagerly they crawled back into the lorries and soon were wending their way, slowly now, because of the ever increasing men and transports and ambulances that were passing from the front to the havens of rest at the rear.

Just as dusk was falling the quick ears of the Bearcats caught deep rumbles, as of thunder.

Instinctively they looked at one another and then at their commander.

"You're right, it's the guns," he exclaimed, reading the questions in their faces.

"Another hour and the shells will be dropping about us—that is, if the Fritzes don't let up in their bombardment."

As reverberation after reverberation rang upon the air the faces of the Bearcats became serious and sober.

For the first time they seemed to realize that they were going to a fate where luck played favorites, whence many an intimate might never return, and the realization threw a pall of silence over them.

CHAPTER XIV

UNDER FIRE

AS the long line of lorries bearing the Bearcats toward the battle front crawled along the main artery the distant rumble of the guns grew louder and louder, until toward dusk it became practically incessant.

This sinister reminder that they were about to go into the game whose end no one could know effectually quieted them, and not even the red-headed Sergeant gave vent to any outburst of anger.

Suddenly above the dull rumble of the artillery there came to the ears of the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion the whirring of many motors.

"Let's hope they belong to us and not to the Huns," exclaimed the man at the wheel of the lorry in which the Commander of the Bearcats and Red Top were riding.

Anxiously the Yanks searched the sky above them, but the falling darkness prevented any chance of their catching any glimpse of the aircraft.

But the identity of the planes was not long in doubt.

Came a mighty roar, followed by the capsizing of the lorry in which the leaders of the Bearcats were, and as they struggled desperately to extricate themselves from the tangle of kits and broken frames, what seemed to them an avalanche of dirt and stone poured down upon them, knocking several of them off their feet.

"It's a good thing that bomb didn't come thirty feet more to the left," exclaimed the driver of the lorry in a matter of fact voice, as though the experience of being half buried under a shower of dirt thrown up by an exploding bomb was a matter of every day occurrence to him. "If it had we'd been gone for fair.

"As it is, nothing more serious is the matter than that you guys must hike the rest of the way, provided you can't find room in any of the other lorries."

The train of motor transports, however, was not destined to escape the attack of the German airplanes so easily.

Again came the sound of the whirring propellers. Again came the moments of awful suspense—and again came the reverberating crash of the explosion of the bomb.

But this time, when the cloud of dirt had cleared away, the sides of the roadway were strewn with torn and bleeding figures.

"We have had our baptism of fire, apparently," exclaimed Captain Hall, rushing forward toward the spot where the wounded men were writhing.

Several of the Bearcats, with the red-headed Sergeant in their lead, followed close upon the heels of their Commander.

"I wonder which of the boys have 'gone over,' " whispered Bud to Red Top.

Before the red-headed Bearcat could reply, however, they had reached the wounded men.

Tensely they peered into their faces. Intently, and then unconsciously, sobs broke from them.

The men whose fighting days were over were not members of the Bearcats.

For a few minutes there was difficulty in identifying them, but upon the arrival of some of the French officers with an ambulance it was found that they were members of the famous Foreign Legion.

"It just goes to show what they call 'the fortunes of war,' " exclaimed the Commander of the Bearcats as the Yanks watched the ambulance men gather the wounded and load them into the Red Cross wagons of mercy.

"Here these fellows have been at the front at least for a week. Perhaps they have even been over the top and have lived through gas attacks. And now, just as they have been relieved from duty and are on their way to a rest camp, struck down by an aerial bomb. It surely seems hard luck."

"It's rotten," growled Bud. "It isn't so bad up in the trenches, because then a fellow has the chance to wipe out some of those devils—I mean he has a chance for his life. If he gets plugged, why he can plug some of the Heinies before he goes over.

"But this way, when they drop bombs on you from heaven only knows how many thousand feet in the air, a guy doesn't have any chance at all. It isn't fair."

As the tall, broad-shouldered Corporal of the Bearcats finished this passionate outburst, one of the French officers who had come up with the ambulance chanced to overhear him.

"Oh, you Americans!" he exclaimed with a shrug. "Who else but an American would expect to find fairness in a Boche? The Boche, he does nothing fair. You must not expect it. Maybe it will save your lives if you remember what I tell you now. You never can trust a Boche.

"You have a saying, I remember they told

me when I was in your grand America, 'the only good Indian is the dead Indian.'

"With the Boche it is the same—the only good German is the dead German.

"Remember that. If one would talk with you, kill him first and talk afterward."

And saluting, the French officer, whose insignia proclaimed him a Colonel, went to the machine in which he had been rushing to the rear when the bomb exploded, entered it and proceeded on his way.

Comment on the words of the Frenchman or on the catastrophe which had overtaken their transport train was prevented by the orders which were shouted at the Bearcats to jump in and help set the overturned lorry back on its wheels and to get the train under way again.

Just as all was ready for the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion to resume their ride toward the battle line, the staccato of airplane propellers again reached their ears.

In dismay the men looked at one another, wondering what was to be the result of this third visitation of aircraft to their transport train.

As the squadron of flyers passed over their heads, or so the Bearcats judged from the sound of the propellers, as the darkness made it impossible for them to see anything that

transpired in the sky above them, the men literally held their breath.

But as moment after moment went by without the sound of any explosion, their alarm subsided.

"It must be either British or French planes in pursuit of the raiding Huns," exclaimed Captain Hall.

"I hope they get every one of the Heinies," growled Jerry.

And as the transport train once more got under way the Bearcats told each other what they were going to do to the first Hun they captured in return for the bombing of the members of the Foreign Legion.

CHAPTER XV

AT THE FRONT

THE end of an hour, after the resumption of their snail-like advance, brought the Bearcats so close to the battle line that the roar of the artillery made it impossible for them to converse in ordinary tones of voice.

Apparently appearing from nowhere, an orderly stepped forth and halted the lorry in the van of the transport train.

"Captain Hall?" asked the orderly, saluting.

"Here," exclaimed the Commander of the Bearcats, returning the salute and leaning forward from his seat in the lorry.

"General French presents his compliments and requests that you detrain your battalion at a place where I will escort you."

As they heard the words, those of the Yanks who were in their Commander's truck pounded each other on the back in delight.

"We're here," they chorused.

"Now for the Heinies," exclaimed Jerry. "I wonder if they'll send us over the top tonight?"

"Sure not, you fool," returned Bud in dis-

gust. A lot of good a bunch of greenies like us would do. Don't you realize that we're to be brigaded with either the French or the British until we get on to some of the tricks the Heinies pull?"

"You'll get your fill of Hun lead before many days," asserted the orderly, who had joined the Bearcats, as one after another of the lorries wheeled into line and discharged its human freight. "There is going to be something doing mighty quick—you can take it from me. The Fritzes have been throwing their whole stock in trade, from high explosives to mustard gas, for the last ten hours.

"To my way of thinking, they'll attack in force tonight. Anyhow, I hope so. If we can once get them out of their trenches, we can quickly put them on the run, but it's getting them out of the burrows they've made that is the hard work.

"Why, some of the bomb-proofs and dugouts we found awhile back were more than a hundred feet under ground.

"The trouble is with these sort of worms you never know when you make an advance but what you are crossing over a terrain that has been mined and may send you bully any minute."

"What makes you think the attack is com-

ing tonight?" asked Red Top, who, with the others of the Bearcats, had crowded as close to one of General French's orderlies as they could get and hung breathlessly on his words.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the orderly, delighted at having so large and attentive an audience. "The first orders was for you Yanks to come right up to the trenches, but when the Heinies started to lay over their barrage that was impossible. There can't nothing but a man get through it, and him only when he finds a hole."

"How'd you get through?" asked the ever-practical Jerry.

"I found one of the holes," returned the orderly with a queer grin.

"Some luck, I call it," commented Bud.

"I'll tell the world so," returned the orderly. "The other boys that started out with me couldn't find any holes; at least they haven't showed up yet, and where I met your transport train was the meeting place stated in our orders."

For several moments after the orderly had made this statement there was a silence among the Bearcats as they meditated on his words.

That its full import was not grasped by them was evident from the question which Jerry almost immediately asked:

"Do you mean to say that other messengers were sent to meet us along with you?"

"That's what."

"But where are they?"

"That depends on the bringing up they had," grinned the messenger. "The fact they haven't arrived means that they couldn't find any of the holes in the barrage, like I told you just now."

Even this explanation did not satisfy the inquisitive Jerry, however, and he asked: "Do you mean to say they sent out more than one messenger with the same message?"

At the question the orderly looked at the member of the Bearcats in disgusted surprise.

"Is all this bunch like you?" he demanded.

"How do you mean like me?" flashed Jerry.

"I mean are they all as dumb as you?"

"I may be dumb, but I'll make it bright enough for you. I'll make you see so many stars you'll think it's broad daylight," retorted Jerry. And before the other Bearcats could intervene or the astounded orderly could prevent, Jerry's fist caught him just under the left ear and sent him sprawling to the ground.

"Here, here, none of that," exclaimed Lieut. Crawford, rushing up as Jerry stood poised above his victim ready to give him another blow as soon as the orderly could get to his feet.

"What's the matter, Jerry?"

"This bird was casting reflections on me, sir," returned the Bearcat.

"Well, we can't have any of this sort of thing going on; the first thing you know you'll be up before the court-martial for insubordination."

"Not from me, he won't," exclaimed the orderly, sitting up and rubbing the side of his jaw that had stopped the Bearcat's fist. "I likes to see a bloke with some life. Besides, I'm to have the training of one of your squads in the trenches, and if I'm lucky enough to draw this laddy buck in the number, I'll be able to even matters up," and the grin that spread over his features at the thought of what would be in store for the hot-headed Bearcat under his instruction presaged no good to Jerry. The sudden illumination of the sky, however, put an end to the wrangle.

"What's coming off now?" demanded Red Top of the orderly.

"That? Oh! that's a star shell," explained the messenger from General French's headquarters. "The Heinies are apparently searching you blokes out."

In the brilliance of the light the scene was such as to stamp itself indelibly upon the memories of the Bearcats. Trees, ambulances, lorries, gun carriages, munition wagons, plung-

ing mules and horses and field kitchens were silhouetted in sharp relief and apparently endless tangle.

And then, as suddenly as it had come, the light disappeared.

For a moment there was dense darkness, and then for the distance of some five miles various colored rockets were shot up.

"Aha, what did I tell you?" cried the orderly in apparent delight as he saw the bursting cones. Didn't I tell you that the Heinies were going to attack tonight?"

"Well, what's that got to do with those rockets?" demanded the corporal.

"Those are the Huns' signals that the different divisions are ready.

"But where they break out the devil himself only knows.

"That's what has been the matter all along—neither the Tommies nor the Poilus ever seem to guess the right place where the Boches are coming through.

"I'll bet—"

Terrific bombardment opened with demoniacal frenzy, interrupted the orderly's words and made it impossible for his eager audience to hear another word that he uttered. For a half hour the terrific cannonade con-

tinued, and then came a silence more intense because of its suddenness.

"They've started," exclaimed the messenger from General French's headquarters in a voice tense with excitement.

"Let's hope the C. O. has outguessed the Huns this time, and that where they hit our lines there will be plenty of Tommies and Poilus to throw them back!"

But fate turned a deaf ear to the orderly's wish.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

THE spot that the commander of the Germans had chosen for his point of attack was the weakest one on the Montdidier sector, which was the part of the western battle front to which the 337th Machine Gun Battalion had been sent. This spot was the juncture of the British and French lines.

And it was because of this fact that neither the British nor the French were present at this place in force.

Indeed, they had grown careless, for there were not more than a score of men of each army in the trenches. This, however, may have been due more to necessity than negligence, for the reason that because of the Huns' terrific onslaught in Picardy every available Poilu and Tommy had been thrown into that sector to check the onrush of the diabolical hordes, whose greatest delight seemed to be to crucify babies and young girls in the towns they captured.

Of the heroic defense the handful of troops in the Allied trenches made against the overwhelming attack of the Germans, the piles of lifeless bodies bore grim evidence.

But the conflict was too unequal. For every Englishman or Frenchman there were a score of Germans, and though the wearers of the Allied uniforms sold their lives as dearly as possible, they were powerless to more than check the enemy for a moment, and within an hour after the attack had been launched the legions of the Huns were pouring through the line of the Allies.

This issue, fortunately, had been anticipated by one officer, who was stationed in the trenches where the attack of the Germans struck, and even as the Huns leaped upon the handful of defenders this officer had hurried messengers away to General French's headquarters for reinforcements.

Fate befriended the bearers of the ill tidings, and the messengers reached General Headquarters in due course.

But their dispatches caused the general staff consternation.

"Townsend asked me to send him men," exclaimed General French. "Where does he think I can get them? The nearest are ten miles away, and they are only untrained Americans."

It happened that there was an officer of the United States Army at the Divisional Headquarters, and as he heard this seemingly dis-

paraging remark of the C. O. the blood surged to his face.

"Untrained they may be, General, but you will find that the soldiers of my country are men. If it is men you need, why not send for them?"

For a moment the C. O. looked at the brash officer in khaki who had resented his aspersions upon the men from overseas, and then he retorted: "Because I should feel that I was sending them to certain death."

"Permit me to remind you, sir, that we came to France to fight, dash and die if necessary. If you will but give us the opportunity you will find that we can do both equally well."

For several minutes General French strode up and down the conference room, and then turning to the other members of his staff he said: "It is evident Townsend must have reinforcements. The Americans are the only ones for the moment available. It looks as though I must send them, but I hate to do it."

Going to his table, General French sat down and hurriedly wrote out his orders, summoned three messengers and sent them speeding toward the spot where the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion and the three regiments of infantry to which they were assigned were bivouaced.

Racing over the rough roads with never a light to guide them, the men on motorcycles were favored by fate, for they arrived without mishap at the C. O.'s quarters of the American Brigade. Tearing open the dispatches, General Harris, who happened to be the officer in command, read: "I need five thousand men to hold the enemy at Cantigny till I can get some veterans from the line.

"Suggest you ask for volunteers. Regret being compelled to use raw men in such an emergency. Signed, R. L. French, General Commander."

For a moment only General Harris stared at the orders, then turned to the messenger who had brought them and said:

"Present General Harris' compliments to General French, and tell him that the entire Provisional Brigade of the First United States Army, ten thousand strong, volunteers to a man and will hold the enemy at Cantigny while there is a life among them."

Saluting, the messenger turned on his heel and left the American Brigade Headquarters, and as he mounted his motorcycle there came to his ears the ringing cheers of the American officers at the staff headquarters for the brigade, who thus gave voice to their approval of General Harris' reply to General French.

But the rejoicing was short lived. Realizing that the moment had come for which every member of the commissioned forces of the United States had longed, and yet at the same time feared—the time when the self-reliant but practically untrained forces of the United States should be brought in a hand-to-hand contact with the highly drilled veterans of the Hun war lords—each officer rushed off to his command to get his men under arms.

As orders were passed bugles sounded, and from their tents the Yanks poured out, quickly forming in squads.

Then came more commands, and the brigade was marched to the drill ground.

Arrived there, General Harris summoned the captains.

"Tell your men," he said, "that upon them has fallen the task of checking the enemy in a new spot at which he has penetrated the Allied battle front. It will be impossible for veteran reinforcements to arrive in force before morning.

"Your country expects her sons to hold the enemy."

Quickly the captains saluted, then went to their respective commands. The word was given to march, and the first division of U. S. troops stepped forth to engage the enemy.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FORCED MARCH

THE emotions that swayed the ten thousand sturdy boys in khaki as they set out upon the desperate mission of checking the Hun hordes in their wild rush through a weak link they had found in the Allied lines—a task of the utmost difficulty even for veteran troops, for the enemy were delirious with the initial success of their attack—can only be imagined. Lest one has been through the very same experience they can never be understood.

To one the important events of his life will pass, panorama like, before his mental eye; to another some trivial incident will come up, while still others will think of home or sweetheart, wife or child, or mutter passionate outpourings of prayer, according to his nature or early training.

But to none did there come a fear of "the great adventure."

At first the strangeness of the action held them silent. They were in a flat country over which lay a pall of mist. Every now and then came the shriek of a high explosive shell, and through the rent it tore in the mist as it

shrieked in its flight, the tramping doughboys caught glimpses of the inky-black sky.

The Yanks were marching in fours, light, with only their rifles and two hundred rounds of ammunition to weight them down, for the emergency was great. Haste was the great object. Such things as food and mess equipment were left to the coming of day and the reinforcement of the veterans who were already rushing by motor transport from miles away on the English and French fronts.

Over a rough road, whose mud sucked at their boots, causing them to reel and stagger at times like drunken men, the long column of Yanks advanced.

Occasionally through the mist they caught sight of whitish heaps of ruins, all that remained of some farm house.

Along the road tall poplars stood spectre-like, their shell-torn trunks and limbs moving like huge wraiths in the fitful gusts of wind that from time to time swept the region.

Then came a sudden change in direction and the doughboys found themselves lunging through a swampy field.

Onward and ever onward they pushed. The bombardment had subsided.

"Bringing up their artillery," was the reason given to Red Top, who remarked upon

its cessation to one of the guides trudging beside him. "The Heinies must have made some big advance for them to outstrip the range of their big guns so soon. We've surely got our work cut out for us."

The answer of the men in khaki was unmistakable.

All along the long column officers barked the commands, "More pep! More pep! The Heinies will be in Paris before you boys get to them if you don't move faster."

Captain Hall with his battalion of the 337th machine gunners held the head of the column, for it was upon them that devolved the task of checking the Huns and stopping them till the infantry could be deployed and stationed in any buildings or protected spots whence they could pour their rain of lead into the oncoming ranks of the enemy.

"Remember, when you boys go into action to shoot low," the Commander of the Bearcats instructed his sergeant and the men whose duty it was to man the weapons that could pour 200 shots a minute from their barrels.

"What you want to do is to mow them down by breaking their legs below the knees. That will bring the men in the front ranks to the ground and the others will pile up on top of them.

"Then will be the time for our infantry to get in their work.

"Of course you can't do it unless the Heinies charge. But from what I can gather they'll charge fast enough.

"The Hun officers seem to have found out in some way that the Yanks, the men they have told their soldiers would never come across three thousand miles of ocean to fight them, have arrived.

"Evidently the German high command has determined that if it is a possible thing the Yanks must be wiped out. They probably reason that annihilation of the first body of American troops in force that goes against them will throw terror into the hearts of our other divisions and will confirm their own statements that the German troops are invincible."

"Lay off that talk, Captain," exclaimed Red Top, forgetful of discipline. "When the Bearcats and the rest of this bunch of Yanks get through with those Heinies the blockheads will surely know they've been in a fight—that is, any of them who are left to know anything.

"We may be green and raw, as those Tommies told us when we passed them on the way back to their rest camp, but every man Jack of us can fight. You know the Bearcats have won

every bayonet contest we went into in the training camps, and they tell me the three regiments of infantry we have are the pick of the crack Rainbow Division in marksmanship.

"Oh, those Huns will know they've met some men before we get through with them—and don't you forget it."

Grinning delightedly as he heard these words from his sergeant, the Commander of the Bearcats concealed his joy, however, and merely said:

"Have it any way you like, sergeant—but don't forget what I said about training those machine guns low."

Despite the heavy going, the men in khaki were making good time on their forced march, and as the darkness of the night began to give way their spirits seemed to rise.

Somewhere down the line somebody had started up "Onward, Christian Soldiers." In a trice the men ahead and behind had joined in.

Swinging to the rhythm, the leg-weary men seemed to get new life and at an appreciably faster gait they plunged forward, the chant from their ten thousand throats rising to a mighty roar.

As the singing broke upon the air with startling suddenness, some of the second lieu-

tenants who were accompanying General Harris were shocked.

"Pass the word to stop that noise, and stop it quick!" barked one of the youthful officers. "The idea of making such a racket when we are going into action. I'll—"

"Now just a minute," interrupted General Harris, halting the orderly to whom the youthful officer had given his orders; then turning to the shavetail, he said:

"Please remember that for the present, at least, I am in command. If I want the singing stopped, I'll stop it.

"As a matter of fact, that's the finest thing my men could do. It takes their minds from what's ahead of them, and it shows that they're not afraid of the vaunted Huns!

"Stop it! Egad, sir, if they stop it I'll send orders for them to start it again."

Fortunately for the Second Lieutenant, the hot flush that rose to his cheeks was hidden from the other officers by the uncertain light of the breaking dawn. But though he said nothing, he was not convinced.

Indeed, when General Harris had passed out of hearing he confided to a brother shavetail that while the C. O. might be all right, he noticed several suspicious things which, in view of his refusing to check the outburst of the

marching thousands, convinced him that he was in the pay of the enemy and that he intended to prefer charges against him.

In amazement the other "Second" looked at his companion. "You don't belong in the army," he snorted. "The place for you is the boob asylum. Prefer charges against General Harris? You, a shavetail, and from one of those hothouse officers' camps back home at that?

"Now I understand what the rest of us have been wondering about, and that is how you ever came to be attached to General Harris' staff. But it's perfectly plain now. Having had you wished on him, he preferred to be annoyed with your presence rather than to run the risk of having you detailed to a company.

"When this little scrap we're going into is over, word of what you tried to do will spread through the officers and men—and you'll be the laughing-stock of the outfit. There's only one thing for you to do."

"What's that?" inquired the shavetail, who had received the merciless rebuke.

"Get yourself transferred to some branch of the service where you can't do any harm."

For several minutes the shavetail pondered the suggestion and then inquired:

"What branch would you suggest?"

With a look of disgust the other officer surveyed the man beside him, then exclaimed:

"Why, the one where they fill the milk bottles for the French babies. You're just the man for that. Everybody has to be so quiet, you know, in order not to wake the kiddies."

"Are you spoofing me?" demanded the luckless "Second," looking at his companion suspiciously.

"Spoofing you?" repeated the other. "Certainly not. No, indeed. *Nobody* could spoof you."

Again the first shavetail lapsed into revery, from which he suddenly roused to say:

"I believe I'll take your advice. But I wonder if the C. O. will let me go?"

"No doubt of it—none at all," assured the other. "In fact, he probably'll send you somewhere as soon as he has time to attend to the matter."

And then, noting that the cars of General Harris and the other high officers had halted and that they had been joined by half a dozen other machines, he exclaimed:

"Hello; I wonder what's up," turned on his heel and joined the headquarters group, where he quickly learned that the new arrivals were the high staff of the British Commander of the Montdidier sector, who had rushed to give his

assistance in directing the first American attack in force.

"Is that your men singing?" demanded General French, cocking his ear in an endeavor to catch the words of the oncoming Yanks.

"It is, sir."

"I couldn't believe it of the beggars at first when I heard it," declared the Britisher, with a smile. "It jolly well shows their hearts are in the right place.

"Do you know, I believe we may be able to prevent the enemy from gaining at will till my veterans come up."

"Gain at will?" repeated General Harris. "If the enemy gains at all, sir, it will only be when they have disposed of the last one of my ten thousand men."

"But you wouldn't hold out like that, would you?" demanded the Britisher. "Surely you'd surrender before you sacrificed all those splendid fellows."

Intently General Harris looked into the face of the Commander of the British sector, then drew himself up stiffly as he replied:

"General, my men do not understand the word 'surrender.'"

Comment either from the Commander of the British sector or any of his staff who had ac-

companied was prevented, however, by the shrill whistling of bullets all about them.

At the same moment the scouts came racing up.

"The enemy is advancing, sir," gasped one of them, out of breath from his haste, saluting.

"How far away are they?" demanded General Harris.

"About a mile, sir."

"That'll give you a little time, at least, for your men to throw up some sort of barricades," exclaimed General French.

"It would, if I intended to wait for the beggars," retorted the American C. O.

As he heard the words the British General quickly adjusted his monocle and surveyed the other from tip to toe.

"And may I ask *what* you intend to do?" he exclaimed, with withering scorn.

"Sure. I'm going to take the Heinies on the run. What's the use of giving them all the advantage?" And then, being human, he could not refrain from paying the Britisher back for his sneers at the fighting qualities of the Yanks and the directing ability of their officers by adding: "If you Britishers hadn't waited for the Huns to attack when and where they wanted to, you wouldn't be in such a fix today."

And before the other could make any retort

General Harris turned on his heel, rejoined his own staff and issued hurried orders.

Intently his subordinates listened, then sped away to carry out the instructions.

As the orderlies reached the units to which they were sent, they delivered the orders, sharp commands rang out, the long column was quickly broken in squads, some of which deployed in various directions, took the locations assigned them and waited, while the officers kept their eyes upon their watches, awaiting the time General Harris had named for the charge.

At last it came.

As the command "Forward!" ran through the ranks the Yanks advanced, the proud folds of their battle flags floating above them.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEARCATS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES TO THE HUNS

WITH the eagerness of hounds loosed from the leash the Yanks leaped forward, bodies slightly crouched, their rifles with the blue-steel bayonets attached at the "ready."

As they plunged over the rough and shell-torn ground there burst from their ten thousand throats an improvised battlecry that had been agreed upon during their forced night march, "Ki-yi-yip! Ki-yi-yip! Run you Hun!"

As the strange cries, like a mighty bombardment of sound reached the ears of the onrushing Huns, they looked at one another in amazement.

The words were, of course, unintelligible to them. But the tone in which they were uttered conveyed to them the understanding that they denoted some sort of challenge, and they asked one another what it could mean.

Two or three of the more intelligent among the imperialistic hordes suggested that it might be the cattle cry of the "Yankee pigs."

Quickly the rumor spread until it reached the ears of an under lieutenant.

Giving vent to a mighty oath, he roared:

"I'll shoot the first of you dogs who repeats that silly tale. His Majesty and the High Command have both told you that there were no 'Yankee pigs' in France. Our U-boats have sunk every troop ship that has left America. So have an end to such talk."

With many mutterings, the men accepted the lie of their commander.

But even as he spoke, the Stars and Stripes came into view of the stone barn in which the platoon was stationed.

For the moment, the gloating Germans, who had broken the Allied line so easily during the night and were resting before starting to drive another wedge toward Paris, were nonplussed.

In accordance with their usual plan of attack, while the main body of troops was making ready for a dash through the country, a light reconnoitering party had been sent forward.

And it was the members of this reconnoissance body that the Yanks had seen advancing and were now attacking.

The fact that they should be attacked while attacking threw the Huns off their speed.

Came the crack of rifle shots, followed by the dropping out of many a spiked helmet.

There was brief and half-hearted response from several parts of the German line, and then the men broke, turned tail and fled back to their main force with all the speed their terror could give them.

"Hoora! We've got 'em on the run! Ki-yi-yip! Ki-yi-yip! Run you Hun!" roared the Yanks, dashing forward.

Forgetful of all the instructions they had received, both at the training camp in America and in the finishing camp in France, the men rose to their full stature.

Sounded the putt-putt of machine gun bullets from the barricaded Hun main line—and many a Yank stretched his measure on the ground who never should have been laid low.

As he beheld the needless slaughter through his field glasses, General French turned to the C. O. of the Americans:

"My God, Sir! Get word to those boys to advance in skirmish order. Their abandon is magnificent—but they are paying for it with their lives. And the Allies need the lives of every available man!"

Quickly General Harris dispatched aides to give the necessary instructions to the officers commanding the attacking Yanks, but before they could be delivered, the boys in khaki had anticipated them.

It took only a glance for them to realize the holes that had been wrought in their line by the deadly hail of German machine gun bullets. And without waiting for orders from their leaders, they dropped to their bellies and continued their advance after the most approved Indian fashion.

This change in tactics bothered the Hun gunners. The terrain was so uneven that they could seldom train their machine guns low enough to stop the wriggling, squirming men in khaki.

But the Yanks were also handicapped from the same cause.

"The only thing to do is to charge!" asserted General Harris, his field glasses sweeping the line of advance from his temporary field headquarters.

"But think of the cost, man," protested General French. "You had a glimpse of it handed to you scarce ten minutes ago."

"Better a few lives and the rout of the enemy, than a slow skirmish which will give the enemy time to bring up his light artillery," retorted the American field commander.

And as though to give evidence to the wisdom of the latter's decision, the German attack changed from the hail of machine gun bullets

to firing of trench bombs and grenades from their howitzers.

As some half dozen of these exploded at once, sending masses, great masses, of earth, mingled with the bodies of Yanks, into the air, General French exclaimed:

"I fancy you are right, sir. Whether you send your men against the machine guns, or allow them to be blown up in squads by these grenades and bombs, your losses will be practically the same.

"If I were you, however, I would withdraw my men. You can throw up some barricades and hold the enemy fairly well until our veterans arrive with their field artillery."

In amazement, General Harris looked at the British officer beside him.

"Do I understand that you advise me to retreat, sir?" he asked in a low voice, his ill-checked anger evident in its timbre.

"And why not?" returned the other. "Britain has not so many men that she can waste a single one.

"All the Allies will understand. Your troops are green; their courage is magnificent—but they haven't learned just yet how to check the enemy. It is massacre to send them on."

"Haven't learned to check the enemy," repeated General Harris, hotly. "And I may

say, sir, that I haven't noticed many places in this Picardy line where the British have learned to stop them.

"The drive has been on four days—and the enemy has advanced fifty miles.

"Please remember that American troops are accustomed to go *ahead,* not back!

"Perkins," and he turned to another aide, "get word to Captain Hall that I expect him to go through the enemy and put those bomb and grenade throwers out of business."

On the instant the instructions were handed to a radio operator and were dispatched over the field telephone to the commander of the Bearcats.

"Here's where the gold stars shine from the Bearcats' service flags at home," exclaimed Captain Hall to his First Lieutenant, who was at his side as he received his orders.

"Damn these Huns, anyway. Somehow, until these instructions came, I have never realized what war was. But now I know.

"We've looked our last upon our full quota of Bearcats, Crawford, old man.

"Get Red Top, will you? The Bearcats have got to put those bomb and grenade throwers out of commission."

As the red-headed sergeant appeared, in re-

sponse to the summons, his C. O. briefly explained the orders to him.

Closely both officers watched to see how he would receive the instructions which meant certain death to heaven only knew how many of the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion.

"The old boy sure knew where to turn to get such a job done and done right," commented Red Top, with a grin.

"That's a man size job to get those Heinies out of the way, that is. But the Bearcats are the boys who can do a man's job.

"I noticed that the bombs and the machine guns that did the worst damage when we first went forward were stationed in that stone barn, way off to the left, there," and the red-headed sergeant pointed to a white building with a thatched roof. "If we can only get that barn, we can command the gully that is behind it and where I fancy the Heinies are in force."

"Good suggestion," exclaimed Captain Hall.

And the Bearcats started on an advance that did not end until they had carved their name with steel on the enemy.

Working Indian fashion down the field until they were opposite their objective, Captain Hall divided his men into squads of twelve

and ordered six of the squads to work out so that, at the whistle, they could dash forward from the three sides of the barn that were exposed.

Tensely the Bearcats waited.

Sounded the whistle—and with a roar, they sprang, almost like one man, to their feet and, leaping now this way, now that, they charged to the little white building in a zigzag attack.

But no rain of lead greeted them.

So long, indeed, did the Huns hold their fire that not only the commander of the Bearcats but the Generals in the field headquarters began to believe that the enemy had withdrawn.

But just as they were almost convinced of the fact, poured broadsides of lead from the three faces.

Flat on their bellies the Bearcats dropped. Waiting a moment, they started to wriggle forward. After a few yards gained in this way, Red Top turned to his squad.

"We'll be wiped off the map if we keep up this game," he exclaimed. "There's just one way to do it—if it can be done.

"We've got to rush it!

"When I say go, we'll get to our feet and run like the devil was after us, instead of in front of us. When I yell the second time, drop down.

"It isn't much more than a hundred yards

to the barn, and some of us ought to make it. Probably when the other squads see what we are up to they'll do the same thing."

No sooner had the red-headed sergeant set his plan before the members of his squad than he gave the word to get ready and then yelled, "Go get 'em!"

Up his men sprang, dashed some twenty feet, and then came the second shout that sent them to the ground again.

But when the tactics were repeated there were not so many of the Bearcats to dash forward.

The loss of their fellows made the survivors literally "see red."

With faces drawn and tense five of them, with Red Top in the van, managed to get to the door of the barn uninjured.

And once there they proceeded to carve their names on the Huns within.

Seeing how things were going after the end of a few minutes, one of the Heinies held up his hands and shouted, "Kamerad! Kamerad!"

Instantly others followed his lead, but they added words in German which Red Top understood, and told him that the Huns planned to fool the Yanks by their offers to surrender

until the Bearcats should lower their bayonets, when the Germans would leap upon them.

Forewarned of the attempted treachery, the red-headed sergeant shouted to his boys:

"We don't take prisoners! Remember that!"

CHAPTER XIX

A CALL FOR AID

WITH their hearts in their mouths General Harris, his staff officers and the officers at the head of the infantry companies watched the assault upon the little white building which had served the enemy so well as a blockhouse.

"If you Americans only had some artillery," lamented General French. "If you had we could have wiped that nest of vipers out before even the first attack started.

"This war has developed one thing, and that is that no army can get far unless it has light artillery to open the way for its men and heavy guns to wear down the enemy."

The tirade of the Allied general was interrupted by the Field Commander of the Yanks.

"The Bearcats did it! The Bearcats did it!" he exclaimed excitedly as he saw a sudden puff of smoke in the direction of the rear of the blockhouse.

Instantly General French swung his binoculars to the spot, and even as he brought them to focus a mighty mass of dirt rose in the air from the gully.

"Bravo!" he cried. "That's what I call the real Yankee cunning. Why, the beggars have not only seemingly put the enemy out of the running in the blockhouse, but they've turned the enemy's weapons on it and are blowing the bloody rotters to hell with their own bombs and grenades. Haw! haw! That surely is a rich one, egad!"

Waiting only long enough to make sure that he had sized up the situation correctly, General Harris quickly ordered an advance by the entire force of infantry.

Eagerly the men in khaki leaped forward and dashed across the open fields, halting only at the edge of the gully, whence the bombs directed by Red Top and his band were consistently blowing dirt and men high into the air.

As they gazed below the American officers beheld a scene of utmost confusion.

Apparently the Huns had massed some twenty thousand troops in the gully, which stretched away for miles, the edge from which the Yanks were attacking forming a screen for the movement of troops after the Allied line had been pierced, where the French and British armies joined.

Just as apparently they had been but resting

before pushing on toward Paris by this new route they had so easily opened.

Consequently, the consternation caused when word was brought from the reconnoitering party that the Yanks were attacking in force was great.

In fact, all of the Hun officers refused to believe the fact until they had crawled to the top of the gully-bank and beheld the Stars and Stripes with their own eyes.

While word of the fact was flashed to the High Command, orders were given to push the "Yankee pigs" back at all hazard.

Maddened by the knowledge that the hated Americans were actually daring to attack them, the German officers were forming their men to send over one of their famous massed-wave charges, when the bombs thrown by the machine operated by Red Top fell among them, and their officers understood the purport all too well. It meant that the blockhouse and the men of the imperial fighting machine in it had been forced to yield.

How the miracle, as they considered it, had been wrought they did not stop to enquire. The steady rain of bombs and grenades, which tore great holes not only in the earth but in the massed troops, was too engrossing, and they

devoted all their thoughts and efforts to getting out of range.

But before they had even been able to extricate their artillery, word came from the High Command that the "Yankee pigs" must be stopped. The Huns were ordered to go over the gully, to take no prisoners and not to leave an American in the Montdidier sector.

Yet to make sure that their orders would be carried out, the High Command announced that it was rushing fifty thousand men to the scene.

Accordingly, the American officers were amazed to see the retreat of the Huns suddenly cease and then change to an advance.

"Are the bloody rotters mad?" demanded General French when he comprehended the action. "Oh, if we only had some light artillery, or heavy artillery, or any kind of artillery, we could just station it at the top of the gully and mow the rotters down as they advance."

"We can do it without artillery," returned General Harris. And, nettled at the constant reminder that America was woefully deficient in the possession of artillery, he barked out orders which resulted in bringing the infantry and the Bearcats into line along the ridge.

Came the first wave of the Huns.

The crash from the volleys of Yank rifles was deafening. Huns toppled to earth by the score, but the wave came on.

For an hour the men in khaki poured their hail of lead into the ranks of the enemy—and still the enemy came on.

"It's hopeless," exclaimed General French. "Those enemy officers will simply keep their men coming on until your ammunition gives out."

In his heart General Harris was beginning to agree with this opinion, when a sudden change was noted in the enemy.

The massed columns were divided into units and then retreated for some two miles, when they swung to the south.

"The rotters are going to try to flank us," declared General French. "This time we'll fool them.

"In an hour," he continued, after looking at his watch, "the British veterans will be on your right flank to protect you.

"If the rotters change their minds again and countermarch to the other flank, the French will be up by then, so you'll be safe on that side, too.

"Then there'll be a different story to tell, for they will be supported by artillery."

Scarcely had the British General spoken the

words which showed that he was reluctant to give any credit for demoralizing the Huns to what he pleased to call the green troops from across the ocean, when a courier dashed up to him and handed him a dispatch box.

"Undoubtedly from the reinforcements," he said, opening the box.

But when he perused the contents his face changed and he stared first at the dispatch and then at the courier.

"Is this a joke?" he demanded, in a husky voice.

"I carry orders, not give them," returned the courier stiffly, but in a tone that evidenced he was not in love with his General.

"But it must be a joke," persisted General French.

"Begging your pardon, when I left I didn't see much to joke about in the situation," declared the courier. Then as the British officer continued to stare at the paper, he asked: "What answer shall I take back, sir? Colonel Fyfe is waiting."

Still General French said nothing for several moments. Then he turned to the Commander of the American troops.

"This is awkward, deuced awkward," he exclaimed. "Fyfe tells me that he cannot send the reinforcements I've been expecting. And

—er—er—he is, in fact, so hard pressed that he is afraid he must give up the left bank of the Souci unless you can spare him some men to hold it, sir."

General Harris would not have been human had he not smiled to himself at this sudden change in affairs, which transformed General French from the giver of assistance to the seeker for it. But he was too courteous a gentleman and too good a soldier to let his personal feelings appear in any way as he replied:

"If Colonel Fyfe wishes he can have what is left of my Bearcats."

"You mean the men who took that blockhouse?" inquired the Britisher.

"The same."

Quickly General French turned to the courier.

"My compliments to Colonel Fyfe," he said, "and tell him that I am sending him a bunch of hellcats by motor truck."

CHAPTER XX

RED TOP TO THE RESCUE

BEFORE the Bearcats could get under way, however, another courier arrived with dispatches stating that Colonel Fyfe had decided to withdraw to the left bank of the Souci river, which he would be able to hold without the need of reinforcements from the Americans.

"I'm glad, very glad," exclaimed General Harris, as he was made acquainted with the contents of the latest dispatch.

"Glad?" repeated the British General, in surprise. "I don't follow you. I see no cause for gladness when any of His Majesty's troops are forced to give ground before the enemy."

"You misunderstand me," returned the Commander of the American forces. "I meant that I was glad because it leaves me my Bearcats to carry out my plan of battle."

"And what may that be, pray?" demanded General French.

"Why, I'm going to follow up my advantage. I've got the Heinies on the run and I'm going to keep them running.

"I'm going to send my men after them and not give them the chance to reorganize."

"But you'll be driving a wedge into the enemy lines," protested the Britisher, in wonderment.

"And why not?" countered the Commander of the Yanks. "It will be some shock to that bogey High Command, which seems to have hypnotized so many of the Allies to think that the hated 'Yankee pigs' have been able to drive back any of their troops and start a wedge into their lines.

"From the way their armies are concentrated, by cutting through where we now are and capturing Cantigny, we shall have a strategic advantage which will enable us to start a circling movement and bottle up a vast quantity of stores and enemy troops."

For several moments after General Harris had ceased speaking the Britisher was silent.

Then he exclaimed, after having very evidently come to a momentous decision:

"I cannot give my acquiescence to such a plan of operation. It is unheard of in this war. And as I know from what I have seen of you within the last twenty hours that you will do as you please, inasmuch as I am unable to sanction your plan, I shall withdraw and return to my headquarters."

The announcement brought sighs of relief from several of the aides of General Harris, and that officer himself did his best not to show his own satisfaction.

But when General French had finally driven away in his motor car, the Commander of the Yanks declared with a dry smile:

"It must be an awful jolt for a man to see the men on whom he looks down violate all the canons of present-day warfare—and get away with it.

"I may not be versed in tactics like the rest of them, but I know we've thrown the fear of cold steel and hot lead into those Heinies by our work this morning, and I know that before they can get their courage back we can throw another crimp into them.

"The boys have had quite a rest since they stopped those human waves. I don't mind telling you now that I began to be afraid that we should break under them. They came on so everlastingly and with such grim precision.

"Hall, you'll take your Bearcats and lead the charge down the gully.

"What I want is some prisoners.

"With all the confusion over their flanking movement, it ought to be possible to get some.

"You will take your machine gunners down

the ridge for about three miles. It will take you an hour to get there.

"At an hour from the time you get under way, I shall send some of the infantry down from here.

"The idea is to chase the Huns down toward you. Hold your fire until they get packed in a mass and then cut loose.

"Remember, our boys will be behind the baby-killers, so watch your gun-pointing."

As the Bearcats fell in line to carry out their part of the battle plan, for the first time it was brought home to them at what cost they had captured the blockhouse.

The faces of many chums, but all respected, were missing, and there were none to say whether those who had fallen had "gone west" or were on their way to hospitals.

But as the realization struck home the survivors promised themselves that they would avenge the missing ones.

Arrived at their station, the surviving members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion peered over the terrain.

Some half a mile away in the gully they beheld a group of farm houses. Close to them the Huns were passing on their way to attempt the flanking movement.

Impatiently the Bearcats awaited the passing of the sixty minutes before they were to open their attack.

At last the moment arrived.

In unison the machine guns crashed out their rain of lead—and, stunned at the unexpectedness of the assault, the Huns stood in their tracks.

But only for a moment. The fire from the guns of the Yanks was too withering for them to withstand and, turning on their heels, some fled back along the route they had come, while others ran toward the open side.

As he saw part of the column turn back, Captain Hall called Jerry and said:

"Go back to General Harris, give him my compliments and tell him that we can round up a batch of prisoners for him if he will give orders for his infantry to stop firing and hold the Huns with their bayonets.

"Then I can drive the baby-killers back with my bayonets and we'll bag a healthy bunch without any danger of shooting into our own ranks from either direction."

In accordance with this plan of action the Commander of the Bearcats took his men down into the gully and toward the farm houses.

As the men of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion entered the yard of the first house to

which they came, they beheld evidences of Hun loot on all sides.

The yard was literally strewn with every conceivable bit of farm-house furniture that would be found in a house owned by the bourgeoisie, which the Germans had dropped in their haste to escape from the bullets of the Bearcats.

"I wonder if any of the devils are left in the house," said Red Top, as he pushed open the kitchen door and entered, followed by half a dozen of his men.

No sign of a living thing was there.

Suddenly, however, they were startled by a shriek of such fear as few of them had ever heard.

"That came from the cellar," snapped the red-headed sergeant.

"Who'll volunteer to go down with me? Mind you, it may be a Hun trick to lure us down there and then shoot us before we can help ourselves."

But not one of the six refused to follow their leader.

With guns extended they crept stealthily down the stone steps into the dim light of the cellar.

And as they reached the foot of the stairs they stood for the moment in amazement.

With her clothes hanging about her in shreds a young woman was fighting with a Hun brute, while in a corner lay another, sobbing and shrieking hysterically.

Only for an instant, however, did Red Top watch the awful scene.

With a growl resembling that of the animal from whom he and his fellows had taken their nickname, he leaped toward the Hun, caught him about the throat and jerked him from his victim.

Unable to believe the fact of her deliverance, the girl stared wildly about her, then fell to the stone floor in a faint.

"Want any help, Red?" called one of his men.

"I do NOT!" gasped the sergeant. "What's more, if any of you so much as lay a hand on this brute, it'll be the kitchen duty for you. He's mine!"

"Don't be a hog, Red," pleaded another of his men. "Let us have a go at the cur. Just because you got to him first, it isn't for you to rule us out."

But the red-headed sergeant paid no heed to the protests of his fellows.

Realizing that their leader would do his self-appointed task with thoroughness, the others turned their attention to the two girls.

Wrapping them tenderly in some quilts which one of the Bearcats brought from an upper room, they carried them to the kitchen, where they finally revived them with the assistance of some wine and brandy that they found in a closet that had been overlooked by the plundering Huns.

When the young women recovered consciousness they could only express their gratitude in pantomime, for neither could speak a word of English and the Bearcats were as deficient in French.

The girls did manage, however, to get it across to their rescuers that the Germans had driven off their father and mother and two other sisters, and that the families in the neighboring farm houses had suffered similarly.

"What'll we do with 'em?" demanded one of the rescuers. "It won't be safe to leave them here. Some of the Heinies may come back."

"There's only one thing we can do, and that is to take them to General Harris. He will know where to send them," declared Red Top.

And accordingly the Bearcats and the young women they had rescued started for the field headquarters of the American Army.

CHAPTER XXI

A SURPRISE

SO engrossed were those of the Bearcats who had assisted in the rescue of the two French girls from the Hun brutes who threatened them—for they were both pretty, despite their torn and battered condition—that they forgot to exercise the precautions due under the circumstances.

Although they had, as they thought, made a thorough search of the farmhouse in the quest of lurking baby killers, they were not familiar with the cleverness of the Huns in hiding, or in the construction of the French farmhouses, to know of the secret dungeons and unobtrusive places for concealment.

Because of this lack of knowledge, they had failed to bring to light a dozen of the Heinies who had hidden in a dungeon, biding their time till the hated Yankee pigs should take their departure. Accordingly, when the silence that had supplanted the fighting about the house had told them that the tide of battle had swept beyond, they ventured to poke their heads from the dungeon.

After listening intently for several minutes, the baby killers decided it would be safe to come forth, and they did so with extreme caution.

Eventually they came to the carcass of the Hun brute who had been struggling so desperately with one of the French girls when Red Top had come upon the scene.

At the sight of their lord and master in such a position, it was evident to the dullest squarehead that he could do no more harm in the world, they burst forth in the wildest blasphemy and cursing.

Grouping themselves about the officer who could kill no more babies, these twelve minions of militarism took a solemn oath that they would avenge him.

"It won't be very safe for us to linger long here," one of them said, in German.

"There is no knowing when those accursed Yankee pigs may be back."

"They will never be back," retorted another.

"Do you not see our noble Ober-Leutnant on the floor there? That shows that he killed all the Yankee pigs who were so cowardly as to attack him."

To anyone except a squareheaded Hun it would have been a natural supposition that if the Herr Ober-Leutnant had wrought any

execution at all upon the men who had attacked him, their bodies would have been somewhere in evidence.

But, being squareheads, they did not realize the fact, and from their long training under the military autocracy they could not conceive that anyone could get the best of their officers.

"Come on, let's be going," urged still another of the men who had preferred to hide in the dungeon to measuring bayonets with the hated Yankee pigs.

Accordingly, they started from the house.

All this had transpired, however, in much less time than it takes to write it, and so when the Huns reached the courtyard they were in time to see in the distance a little handful of Bearcats escorting the two girls who had been torn from the hands of their officer.

At the sight, they shook their bayonets angrily and again broke into blasphemous cursing.

"There the Yankee pigs are," cried one of them, excitedly.

"God is surely with our Kaiser, for he has given us an opportunity so soon to avenge our Herr Ober-Leutnant."

"Come on, let's go after them!"

The other baby killers, however, did not seem so keen about putting into execution their

vow of vengeance. It was one thing to be very fierce and bold in a cellar when no one else was about, but it was a very different thing to show the same courage in the presence of a group of men who had made away with their commander.

After these words, for several moments the rest of the squareheads pondered the situation, and then one of them exclaimed, "There are only four of the Yankee pigs, and there are twelve of us. I think it would be safe to attack."

"But we do not want another fight, we only want the girls.

"I have a plan. We will go up behind them and yell 'Kamerad.' The pigs will think we are going to surrender, and then we can put them out of the way while two of you seize the girls and take them some place where we can have a feast."

This plan met with instant approval, because it suggested in all probability they would be able to kill the four men of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion without any danger of getting killed themselves, whereas, if they started their attack with lead, there was too much danger that the boys in khaki would put some of them out of commission.

As has been said, the interest of the quartet

of Bearcats in the girls they had rescued was so great, and they were trying so hard to talk with them by pantomime and such French as they could remember from the lessons they had received while in camp in the United States, that they did not employ the vigilance warranted.

So the squareheads were almost upon them when Jerry chanced to look back and beheld the Huns.

"Suffering cats, here come the Heinies," he gasped, at the same time facing about and throwing his rifle on his shoulder.

As the words reached the ears of his three pals they likewise wheeled, guns ready for action, while the French girls, horrified at the reappearance of their recent captors, dropped to their knees and prayed.

Had the Germans any courage, of course it would have been all over with the little group of Bearcats.

As it was, however, the sight of the four gun barrels pointed at them caused them to be very glad they had determined to capture the four men and two women by strategy rather than by force of arms.

As a consequence, with one accord the baby killers threw their hands high above their heads and yelled "Kamerad."

At the word of surrender, the Bearcats looked at one another in astonishment.

"Don't let your gun sag, Jerry," exclaimed Red Top. "There's something queer about this somewhere.

"It doesn't look natural for twelve men, even if they are Huns, to surrender to four.

"It's my idea they are up to some new deviltry. They probably want to get the girls back."

"Nothing doing on that line," exclaimed Bud. "I'll shoot the girls first, if we can't stand the beggars off.

"I know, if we could make them understand, that they would rather have us do it."

"What's the use of talking any of that stuff?" snapped Red Top. "There are only three of those Fritzies to each one of us. If four Bearcats can't account for twelve baby killers, then they are a disgrace to the American Expeditionary Force.

"We'll just show them that we are smart enough to see through their trick.

"So when I give the word to fire, we'll wipe them out."

During this colloquy the squareheads stood with hands in the air, at frequent intervals shouting "Kamerad."

All the while however, the fact that the men

to whom they had offered to surrender made no move, mystified them.

But their perplexity did not last long.

Suddenly the command "Fire!" rang out from the lips of the red-headed sergeant.

Crash! rang out the volley from the four Lee-Enfields — and four baby killers were on their way to where they could commit no more atrocities against women and children.

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

THE hot lead which had greeted them in place of the anticipated welcome of their surrender instantly brought home to the squareheads that their strategy had failed.

Before they could lower their hands and pick up the weapons they had dropped, two more of their number had fallen.

With a roar of sullen fury, the remaining six charged.

"Jerry, you beat it with the girls. Take them to field headquarters.

"It's my guess that these baby killers hate the thought of giving them up.

"We may be able to stand them off, but it's dollars to doughnuts that someone will get hurt.

"I don't want any more misfortune coming to these girls.

"Goodness knows, they must have had enough while they were in the hands of those Huns; so, Jerry, take them back to the C. O."

"Aw, let someone else do it, and let me stay and have the fun.

"I'm no lady's maid, and Buddy here looks like one of them fashion plates in the magazines the girls like to rave over. Send him. Besides, he is bigger, and the two of them could hide behind his spread of shoulders."

"Nothing doing, Jerry; you're elected," snapped Red Top, "and be lively."

Realizing that to delay or argue further with his sergeant would jeopardize the chances of his pals for holding their own, to say nothing of such flagrant violation of army discipline, Jerry seized the girls one by each arm, raised them to their feet, and then, in swift pantomime, got it across to them that it was necessary for the two girls to accompany him in order to escape the onrushing Huns.

No second urging did the peasant girls need.

They saw the three Americans resolutely facing the six squareheads.

From the expressions on their faces, it was evident that they considered the outcome foregone, and they did not wish again to be in the clutches of the Germans.

Accordingly, they accompanied Jerry at top speed.

As the squad of Huns beheld their particular quarry slipping from their grasp, the Bearcats noticed that they talked eagerly and

excitedly, for the moment checking their advance.

"Now, I wonder what all that means?" exclaimed the red-headed sergeant.

Scarcely had the words left his lips, however, when all six of the Huns suddenly turned on their right flank and started in hot pursuit of the two girls and Jerry.

"Well, you don't have to wait long to find out what it means," returned Bud to his superior.

"Evidently the girls are their sole interest."

The retort which the red-headed sergeant of the Bearcats made was not pleasant to hear.

After expressing his feelings freely for several moments, he exclaimed, "Come on! we've got to get in between Jerry and those girls."

"Which is no easy matter, judging from the way they can cover ground," declared the broad-shouldered corporal as they started on the dead run.

For several moments the trio of Bearcats rushed toward their comrade who was acting as escort for the refugee peasant girls, as fast as their heavy equipment would permit.

It soon became apparent, however, that the Huns would reach their prey before the rescuing party could arrive for its relief.

"There is only one thing now, and that's to shoot," grunted Red Top.

"We'll just swerve a little to the left, here, and then we can get a chance to shoot at the Fritzies without so much danger of some of the lead finding Jerry and the girls."

Other eyes than those of the Bearcats, however, were upon the participants in the exciting race for life.

From his station on the ridge, Captain Hall saw the action.

It took but a moment for him to interpret it.

Calling an armed car, he had it manned with a machine gun and several sharpshooters.

"Drive just as fast as the Lord will let you," he exclaimed to the chauffeur. "I shall expect you to bring back those two girls."

No roads were there for the car to travel, but even if there had been it would have been difficult to attain greater speed than that at which this armed car leaped across country on its errand of mercy.

Arrived at the edge of the gully, there was no hesitancy in the car's driver—just taking a tighter hold on the steering gear, he shot over the bank.

Fortunately, the drop was not far, and the machine, being a French one, was strong, and both car and occupants were safe. There was

a pause of but a moment while the machine strained to lift itself from the ruts made when landing, and then it resumed its onward dash.

Once on the flat, the machine gunner opened fire.

This unexpected reinforcement for the refugee peasant girls took whatever heart remained out of the pusuing Huns.

Separating and zigzagging, they started back to their own lines.

Checking their fire, the men in the armed car drove on until they met the girls and the three Bearcats, who had also come to their rescue.

Quickly the girls were installed in the armed car, while the Bearcats and two of the sharpshooters who had been sent in the machine, but had given their places to the girls, decided they would capture the Huns who had attacked them.

"You go back to the C. O.," ordered Red Top to the chauffeur, "and deliver these girls safely. The rest of us are going to get some prisoners."

Suiting their action to their words, the Bearcats, under the command of their red-headed sergeant, started on the trail of the baby killers who had sought to outwit them.

"I don't like the looks of this, Red Top,"

exclaimed Bud after a while. "The first thing we know, we will tumble into a German trench."

Scarcely had the words left the lips of the broad-shouldered corporal when what seemed to the Bearcats like a forest of spiked helmets sprang up from all directions, and the Bearcats, surrounded, were ordered to surrender.

"That's some tough word for a Bearcat to hear," grunted Red Top.

"Under the circumstances, however, it looks like the only thing to do. But we can ease our souls by making a mental reservation that we are not surrendering, but are just putting ourselves 'in the hands of the enemy' until we can get away."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ATTEMPTED ESCAPE

"'TIS not a mental reservation we need, but a father confessor," declared Jerry.

"Oh, cheer up! You must have been the original gloom," retorted Red Top.

"And why not?" protested Jerry.

"Aren't we in the hands of about one hundred of the enemy?"

"If that's not as good as being dead, I don't know what is—taking into consideration the havoc we have wrought with the squareheads today."

"But don't forget that old wheeze," returned Red Top. "While there's life there's hope."

"There is something more doing here than we know about. So long as these Heinies haven't already killed us, maybe they are not going to.

"And if they don't, why, we can get away."

The actions of the Germans, who had so suddenly appeared, as it were, from nowhere and surrounded the six Bearcats, were a puzzle to them.

They had expected to be struck down with the wicked German knives or bayonets, for they were so entirely overwhelmed by numbers that it would be simply a waste of powder and shot to use a rifle or revolver on them.

"What do you suppose it means, Sarg?" demanded Jerry, when he could no longer stand the strain of suspense.

"Are they going to eat us up, or carve us up, or what?"

"You can search me," returned Red Top.

"But I am glad for every minute they allow me to breathe."

And so the little band of six Bearcats stood watching the hundred or more men by whom they were surrounded, their faces white even beneath the coating of dirt and sunburn.

In order that they might not be taken by surprise again, Red Top commanded them to orient—that is, to station themselves at the four points of the compass—for by that means it would be possible to keep watch of what the men surrounding them were doing on the north, south, east, or west, while Bud and the sergeant himself were able to keep watch over the whole thing.

Had the Bearcats known, however, they were in no danger.

When word was first sent to the French and

English along the western battle front that the American Expeditionary Forces were on the high seas coming to their relief over a veritable bridge of ships, such word was quickly passed to the German lines.

Upon its receipt there was a wavering among the German hordes.

Fearing the spread of such information, the German High Command sent instructions to all officers on the front that they must deny the story vigorously and proclaim it another evidence of American bluff.

The obedient officers followed their instructions, but when more and more of the hated Yankee pigs began to appear in the theater of battle, this excuse did not work.

Accordingly, the Germans said that America had sent over a few troops, but that the imperial submarine had succeeded in sending every succeeding transport to the bottom with the loss of all on board.

The High Command further announced that it was extremely interested in the equipment of an American soldier.

On this account, the High Command promised a reward of a thousand marks for the first ten American prisoners that should be brought in unwounded and under battle equipment.

In addition to the reward of a thousand marks, a two weeks' vacation at one of the rest camps awaited the men fortunate enough to effect the capture.

But, in ignorance of these conditions, the Bearcats grimly awaited their fate, determined to sell their lives at as great a cost as possible.

"That fellow there at the head, who is doing all the talking, must be some sort of a sergeant," said Bud.

"As far as I can make out, there isn't an officer in the crowd," returned Jerry.

"For which we can thank our lucky stars," exclaimed Red Top. "Without one, we've got some chance; with one, there wouldn't be the ghost of a show."

"It's plainly evident the baby killers are disputing over something among themselves. The first thing we know, they'll be in a free fight—and then will come our chance. We can make some sort of a getaway before they realize what's happening. That's all I want. We can break through the circle on the thinnest side, and when we get outside we can pour enough lead into them to hold them for a few minutes, at least.

"But don't make any move until I give the word."

As the reader knows, Red Top's surmises were remarkably correct.

The squareheads who had surrounded the little band of Bearcats had been aroused by the sudden appearance in their dugout of the six baby killers to whom the handful of boys from the 337th Machine Gun Battalion had given chase.

When the Huns saw these intrepid boys in khaki in their own terrain, they grinned at one another delightedly, for they saw the opportunity of a bloodless capture which would bring the coveted thousand-mark reward from the All Highest and two weeks' vacation at the rest resort, where wine and other things were without limit.

Keeping watch of the advancing Bearcats through their periscope, the Huns finally decided the time had come for them to appear, and, accordingly, they debouched from the various exits to the trench.

They had given the order to surrender, and, scarcely waiting to see whether it was obeyed or not, they immediately entered into a lively argument as to whom the reward and vacations should go.

The men who had looted the farmhouse and then had tried to seize the two peasant girls

from their rescuers, claimed that they were entitled to the rewards and to the rest.

The others protested that had it not been for their presence in the dugout it would have been impossible for the hated Yankee pigs to have been surrounded.

The stake was for six thousand marks, and the rest with unlimited license—one that to the squareheads seemed grand beyond all dreams.

Because of their desire to attain it, the argument waxed bitter in the extreme.

Suddenly one of the men cried, "There goes the Herr Ober-Leutnant. If he happens to see us, it's all over with us. He'll claim the reward and vacation."

There was no need of telling the rest of the Huns that this member had spoken the truth.

"We'll draw lots for the prisoners. Each faction will have a spokesman, and he will draw the lot for his companions."

After some slight demur, this plan was agreed upon, and in a few moments the Yanks were practically forgotten, so eagerly were the Heinies crowding about their representatives who were to draw for the stakes.

"Now's our chance," whispered Red Top. "Let's go!"

"Remember, don't shoot until I give the command."

Immediately the sextet of Bearcats leaped toward their own camp and raced over the ground.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BEARCATS TURN THE TABLES

NOT FAR had they proceeded, however, when Red Top exclaimed to the others, "This seems to be too good a chance to start something while we are behind the enemy lines."

"There don't seem to be any of the Huns about—"

"Nor did there when we were surrounded a few minutes ago," interrupted the broad-shouldered corporal.

"Yes, I know," returned the red-headed sergeant. "But it does seem as though it were mighty quiet here."

"It's my guess that the whole murdering bunch of them are out trying to stop the advance of us Yanks."

"Maybe," admitted Bud, reluctantly.

"What's on your mind to do?"

"Why, we'll see if we can't find the C. O. in his bombproof. Maybe something will occur to us that will let the General know we've been there."

The spirit of adventure being strong upon

one and all of the Bearcats, they proceeded to grope their way through one of the trenches they came across in their flight back to their own lines.

With the utmost cunning, the six members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion advanced, employing all the skill of woodcraft they had learned in their life on the prairies and among the Rockies.

Of a sudden, Jerry dropped to his knees, putting his right ear to the plank which covered the base of the trench.

"Someone is coming," he whispered, in response to the looks of interrogation visible on the faces of his companions.

"See that bend," and the red-headed sergeant pointed to a curve in the trench some twenty feet ahead of them.

"If we can make that curve before whoever is coming does, everything will be all right.

"Bud, you and Jerry will line up on the left-hand side of the trench at the curve, so that you can't be seen by anyone approaching.

"As soon as the German comes within reach, lay him out with your revolver butt. The other four of us will crouch down ready to bring relief if you need it to handle the man who is coming, or to take care of any others who may be following."

Realizing that time was precious, the Bearcats lost none in carrying out the instructions of their sergeant.

Only a moment, so it seemed to them, were the few members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion in position when the powerful figure of a man turned the corner.

Evidently, from the expression Red Top noticed in the fellow's eyes, he saw the trap into which he had fallen.

But before he could do anything or say anything, or even before the red-headed sergeant could change his command, the revolver butts in the hands of Bud and Jerry crashed through his skull, his steel helmet having been knocked off by a swift upper blow which Bud had administered before using his gun butt.

Listening intently, Red Top finally decided that there were no others following their captive.

Coming nearer to where the prostrate figure lay, he stationed Jerry as sentry, and, with his corporal, bent over the crumpled body.

"Now we *are* in for it," gasped the broad-shouldered corporal, in dismay, as he and the red-headed sergeant stooped to examine the man who had come upon them, with such disastrous effect to himself.

"H'm," murmured Red Top as he exam-

ined the figure, which was clad from toe to head in the regulation service uniform of a captain in the American Expeditionary Forces.

"Maybe he is and maybe he isn't," Red Top finally said aloud. "If he is, I'd like to know what he is doing all by himself in the German trench."

"Perhaps he is doing exactly what we are; that is, looking to start something," suggested Bud.

"Well, there is only one thing for us to do, and that is to take him out of here as a prisoner and get him through the R. O. lines," declared Red Top.

"Somehow, to me there is something out of the way about this."

The others of the Bearcats readily gave their consent to the suggestion, for they were not particularly in love with the idea of winding their way through a German trench where they might come across overwhelming numbers at any moment.

Quickly the Bearcats grabbed their prey and lifted him as best they could out of the trench, after having taken a cautious survey of the lay of the land and having found it apparently free from baby killers.

After they had all come to the top of the trench, they hurriedly devised a sling, into

which they threw the man they had captured and started back to the station of Captain Hall.

Fortune evidently smiled on them, for, in spite of the tremendous hazard of the attempt, they literally seemed to pick holes through the firing, and without mishap reached the commander of the Bearcats.

At the sight of the six men who had been in the hands of the enemy and made their escape, bringing a prisoner with them, Captain Hall's face lighted up with a smile.

"What is it, Red Top?" he asked, pointing to the figure they had in the sling.

"Don't know, sir," replied the red-headed sergeant. "We found him while we were looking around in one of the Hun trenches."

"Do you mean to tell me you have been behind the enemy lines?" demanded the Captain of the Bearcats.

"Yes, sir," said Red Top.

"Don't you know that is forbidden unless you are acting under orders?"

"Well, you see, sir, we could exactly help it."

"Do you mean you were captured?" questioned Captain Hall, his face very stern.

"Well, I'd hardly say we were captured," returned the sergeant. "It was this way, sir."

And then in as few words as possible the

red-headed sergeant related the adventure which had transpired so recently.

With each word of the narrative the expression on the face of the commander of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion indicated greater and greater amazement.

And when the story had been finished, Captain Hall exclaimed, "You Bearcats surely do seem to enjoy charmed lives.

"If it had been any other branch of the service, or even any other squad of my Bearcats, you surely would have been wiped out.

"As it is, I congratulate you. I only wish I had ten million troops like you here instead of only four.

"Now let's look at your captive."

Releasing the sling, officers and privates beheld a man in the uniform of an American captain, as the reader already knows.

"Why, the fools have laid out one of our own men," exclaimed another officer who had come up during the colloquy and had only arrived in time to hear a few of the last words. "They probably got rattled and didn't know what they were doing.

"It's too bad, really, but of course it means court-martial for them."

"Oh, does it?" demanded Captain Hall, a curious tone to his voice.

As the commander of the Bearcats and the others stooped down, the better to examine the captive, Bud spoke up.

"He may be an American officer," declared the broad-shouldered corporal; "but it seems queer to me, Captain Hall, that he should be walking in a German trench and wearing a German spiked helmet.

"How do you know this?" demanded the commander of the Bearcats.

"Can you prove it?" inquired the officer who had suggested the court-martial.

"Here's the helmet," exclaimed Bud, pulling the spiked bronze headgear from a hook at the back of his belt.

"How do you know it was his?" demanded the doubting officer.

"Because, sir, I knocked it off with a blow from my left hand, so that I could get to his skull with the gun butt I held in my right."

As though unable to believe their ears, the officers looked from one another to the Bearcats. Before any of the former could speak, the Bearcats exclaimed, almost in chorus, "That's the truth, sir; we all saw Bud do it."

In the face of this unanimous support of the broad-shouldered corporal, the querulous American officer subsided.

"The circumstances surely warrant a thorough investigation," decided Captain Hall. "I'll summon some of the M. I. B.'s."

"While we're waiting for them, we'll examine the contents of the fellow's pockets."

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE TRAIL OF A BAND OF SPIES

AS the Captain of the Bearcats started to carry out the examination of the captive, he dropped to his knees beside the prostrate body and opened the tunic.

When he threw back one side of the tunic, there stared up at him and the other officers of the American Expeditionary Forces who chanced to be present, insolently, an iron cross.

"Surely, it's an unusual thing, Sommers, for a bona fide American captain to be wearing a German cross—don't you think so?"

And the commander of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion turned toward the officer who had suggested court-martial for the sextet of Bearcats who had brought in the prisoner.

"These men of yours might have planted it there," sneered Sommers, who held the rank of major of infantry.

"Undoubtedly, since my boys carry so many iron crosses in their pockets," retorted Captain Hall.

"Look here, sir," Sommers exclaimed, glar-

ing at Captain Hall; "I will not be made a laughing-stock by any inferior officer.

"If you don't apologize immediately, I will report to the C. O. and have him bring you before the court-martial."

"Go as far as you like, Sommers," retorted Hall, and then getting to his feet and striding over to the troublemaker—who, as might be expected, was a small man—this six-footer stared down at him as he added, "And that goes both ways.

"I see you don't understand what I mean," added the Captain of the Bearcats, after a pause.

"So I'll explain.

"I mean that you can go to any length you desire about bringing me before a court-martial, and that you can get as far as possible away from here. Understand?"

"And what if I refuse to leave?" demanded Sommers.

"Why, I'll kick you out of the way," smiled the commander of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion.

"If you are going to put me up before court-martial, I might as well do things up properly before I am cited."

Just as a little toy dog stares at a St. Bernard for a few seconds, emits a couple of

defiant barks, then turns tail and runs away as fast as he can, so the little major growled for a few moments at the huge captain, then turned tail and stalked away with all the haughtiness his five-foot-four could muster.

Without comment, the leader of the Bearcats returned to his task of searching their captive.

In one of the pockets of the tunic, there he found two notebooks.

In one were what seemed to be map charts. In the other there were three lists of names.

Before one list there was a single star; before the next there were two stars, and before the third list there were three stars.

In the first list there were names of men which sounded as though they were attached either to members of the American or British enlisted men.

One or two were of sergeants, and there was one sergeant-major.

In all, the list totaled 216.

List No. 2, however, apparently was composed of officers in one or both of the English-speaking armies, ranking from second lieutenant to general.

As he ran down the names in the second list, Captain Hall suddenly gave a sharp ejaculation.

Concealing his excitement as much as he could, Captain Hall asked, "Do any of you know the initials of Major Sommers?"

"Yes, I do," answered another officer.

"Well, what are they?" inquired the Captain of the Bearcats.

"C. W."

"Much obliged," exclaimed Captain Hall.

Then, taking out his dispatch book, he wrote hurriedly for several minutes.

His writing finished, he beckoned to Red Top and instructed him to carry the dispatch to General Harris, at headquarters, without delay.

Making no effort to stifle the sigh of disappointment which came from his throat as he realized that he was not to be present during the remainder of the search, the red-headed sergeant started on his way.

Upon the departure of Red Top, the commander of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion fell again into a study of the third list of names.

These, however, seemed to be a list of high German officers.

From the three lists before him, Captain Hall came to the conclusion that the names in the first two were those of German spies who had worked themselves into the American

army, and that the names in the third list, the one with the three stars, were of high German officers with whom these spies could get in touch.

In another pocket there was found a bill of lading for goods that had been shipped from Brussels to Berlin.

Obviously, the contents of this bill of lading represented plunder taken from the richer class of the Belgian city.

And the list was comprehensive.

In it there was everything from a feather bed, a grand piano, watteau chairs, to several paintings by Van Dyck, Rembrandt, and one Botticelli. There were also kitchen utensils.

"Evidently this bird we have here is an adept at looting," exclaimed Lieutenant Crawford, who had left his post to find out what had happened. "Anyone who will loot a home or a church or a store ought to be hung instanter."

"Tut, tut, boy," returned Captain Hall. "You must remember that if that law had been in force at the time of the Boxer uprising in China there would have been many an American officer who would have had to pay the penalty."

In another pocket Captain Hall came across some cards bearing the name of the man he

now was thoroughly convinced was a spy, but these he took possession of before any of the others could get a glimpse of them.

In other pockets there was much money and many jewels, some unset, others in rings which still showed traces of blood—evidencing they had been torn from the hands of some unfortunates who had fallen into the clutches of the onrushing baby killers.

One of the Bearcats, chancing to look in the direction of the C. O.'s headquarters, suddenly stood up straight, cupped his hands over his eyes, and peered beneath them.

"Here comes Red Top with that Major Sommers," he announced.

Instantly the others turned their eyes in the direction indicated and stared, fascinated, while the red-headed sergeant and the detractor of the Bearcats approached.

When within some hundred yards of the spot where the other officers were gathered, Major Sommers stopped, said something to Red Top, and started away.

In a moment Red Top was upon him, and, drawing his service gun, he pressed it into the side of the recalcitrant major.

This was a sufficient reminder to the major of what was in store for him, but, with the

defiance suggestive of a bantam rooster, he accompanied his conductor.

Arrived at the edge of the group of Bearcats and other officers, Red Top saluted and said to Captain Hall:

"General Harris sends his compliments and says that you are to hold a drumhead court-martial upon Major Sommers without delay."

CHAPTER XXVI

RED TOP FINDS HIMSELF AN OBJECT OF HUN INTEREST

"CALL IT, Crawford," commanded Captain Hall as soon as the red-headed sergeant had delivered the message from General Harris.

"But what is all this about?" demanded Major Sommers.

"You'll find out soon enough," returned the commander of the Bearcats.

"Corporal, you and one of your men keep close watch over the Major."

Calling for a drum, which has given the name to the time-honored court-martial in the field, Captain Hall seated himself at the head, with Lieutenant Hall and Lieutenant Adams, who had been designated to act with him, on each side.

Just as the guards were leading Major Sommers to his place at the drum, two liaison officers arrived.

At the sight of the prostrate figure clad in the uniform of the American army, with his head badly injured, and another American

officer whose shoulderstraps showed him to be a Major, obviously under arrest, their faces expressed the perplexity to which neither could give voice, for the reason that they were subordinate in rank to the Captain who was to preside at the drumhead court-martial.

"Does either of you speak or read German?" inquired the commander of the Bearcats, returning the salute of the two liaison officers.

"We both do, sir," the men addressed replied, practically in chorus.

"Good," returned the president of the court-martial.

"One of you will kindly take this notebook, which appears to contain a code and maps and charts, and try to decipher them."

"As for you," and he turned to the other, "here is a notebook containing three lists and what are evidently instructions or reports.

"I want those as quickly as possible.

"First of all, please find out what these three lists of names comply with."

Eagerly the two liaison officers went about their task, while the commander of the Bearcats, with a reassuring smile at the fellow members of his drumhead board, bid them smoke if they cared to.

To the interested Bearcats who had been in

the hands of the enemy, only to escape and return with the captive, the time required by the liaison officers to make head or tail out of the dispatches seemed interminable.

At last, however, the officer who had the notebooks with the lists in them indicated that he was ready to interpret them. Instantly the severity of military discipline settled upon the officers comprising the drumhead court-martial.

"Corporal," commanded Captain Hall, "bring your prisoner to the drum."

While these instructions were being carried out the commander of the Bearcats held a whispered conversation with the officer who had the notebooks.

As Captain Hall listened to the words of the other he permitted himself a momentary smile, and then grew very stern as he addressed the prisoner.

"Major Sommers," he began, "you are accused of high treason against the sovereign government of the United States of America.

"The specific charge constituting this treason is that you direct a band of twenty German spies who are clothed in the khaki of the American Expeditionary Force.

"There is no use for you to deny it, because the facts are contained in a book which was

taken from the carcass of this baby killer now before your eyes, who has been masquerading as a Yankee.

"There is only one thing you can do to in any measure atone for the wrong you have done your country—explain in detail the system under which you and your fellow-spies worked."

At such a suggestion, Major Sommers sneered and then said: "I should be the last one to be accused of treason.

"There is no more loyal American than I—"

"Don't blacken your already black soul with more lies," interrupted the president of the court-martial.

"We know what these two code books say, and their evidence is indisputable. I—"

Before the commander of the Bearcats could make any further utterance, Lieutenant Crawford leaned over and whispered to him."

"That's a good idea," returned Captain Hall.

And, beckoning to the red-headed sergeant, he exclaimed, "Sergeant, you will go to the quarters of Major Sommers and seize all papers and uniforms you find there."

As the president of the court-martial issued these instructions he kept his eyes upon the prisoner and noted the latter gave a start,

while his face went white when he heard them.

Exchanging smiles with his First Lieutenant, Captain Hall once more addressed the prisoner.

"Is there any last message you would care to have delivered to your family?" he inquired.

"Do you mean to say you are not going to let me put in any defense?" demanded the unfortunate Major.

"You denied the charge once. We have conclusive proof in these notebooks that you are guilty, and from the start you gave and the expression that settled on your face when I issued instructions for your quarters to be searched, there would seem to be nothing you could say that would help your condition.

"Our time is precious, because we are soon going to launch another attack, and it would only be a waste of this precious time to listen to your whinings and pleadings.

"Corporal," he said to the broad-shouldered Bud, "detail ten men to take the prisoner down into the gully to pay the penalty of his treason."

Quickly the corporal picked his men, and, returning to Captain Hall, saluted and said:

"The firing squad is ready, sir."

"Very good," returned the commander of the Bearcats. "Take the prisoner away."

As the corporal started to seize the erstwhile Major by the sleeve, Captain Hall said:

"Just a minute, Corporal; I have forgotten something."

And, drawing his sword, the commander of the Bearcats approached the luckless prisoner, cutting all the buttons and insignia from his uniform.

"Now you may take him away," ordered Captain Hall.

And amid a silence which could almost be heard, the broad-shouldered corporal and his firing squad formed a hollow square with the prisoner in its center, and disappeared over the edge of the gully.

"What's in the other notebooks?" inquired Lieutenant Crawford of the liaison officers.

"A chart book, apparently containing maps of German locations along the Montdidier sector.

"It should really prove of great value to the C. O."

"Evidently it was given to each spy in our ranks in order that he might know how to reach any of the German officers when he should have important information to impart.

"There also seem to be marks that would indicate the most advantageous spots at which to cross 'No Man's Land'."

"But what has that to do with the list with the three stars, which are composed entirely of German names?" asked Lieutenant Adams.

"Why, those are the names of the men who can be entrusted with the information the spies are to impart."

"What are you going to do with these notebooks?" inquired Lieutenant Crawford.

At the question, the liaison officers looked at the First Lieutenant of the Bearcats with amazement.

"Why, we shall find out to which branches of the service these other enlisted men and officers contained in the first two lists belong, and then see that they receive the penalty for high treason.

"I suppose by this process of elimination we shall be able to determine who this wounded man is."

"I can tell you that right away," returned the leader of the Bearcats. "I have his cards in my pocket."

"His name is Henry Sommers."

The suddenness of this announcement amazed the officers who heard it, remembering as they did that the man who had just been sent to his fate was also named Sommers.

"Do you suppose they are brothers," asked

Lieutenant Adams, giving voice to the question they all desired to ask.

"That I can't tell you offhand," replied Captain Hall.

"But the name Henry Sommers, Captain, is on the same list of officers which contained C. W. Sommers, Major.

Further speculation as to the possible relationship between the two men of the same name who were listed as official German spies was interrupted by the return of Red Top with a mass of papers and other paraphernalia he had found in the quarters of Major Sommers.

"Anything good?" inquired one of the liaison officers.

But the red-headed sergeant only shook his head, adding, however, as he passed the paper to his captain, "Here's something that is rather interesting to me."

Taking the missive, the commander of the Bearcats read it and then re-read it.

Finally reading it aloud to his officers.

"Hauptmann Holder, there is one man with General Harris' division we must put out of commission.

"Of course, my men could do it in camp, but the fellow is of such a nature that he needs the treatment that only you, dear Hauptmann, can give.

"So I propose to overwhelm him, bind him and deliver him behind your lines within three days.

"You will know him because he has a red head."

CHAPTER XXVII

RED TOP PLAYS DECOY

SEARCH among the other belongings of the discredited major, which the red-headed sergeant had brought with him, disclosed correspondence with various officers in the American Expeditionary Forces.

It took the liaison officers and those in command of the Bearcats but a few moments to realize that these letters must be in code, for their wording seemed scarcely to make sense.

"Evidently the men to whom these letters were addressed are men whom Sommers was endeavoring to corrupt and make traitors to their country," declared the commander of the Bearcats.

"Or it may be the correspondence with the traitors he has already listed," suggested Lieutenant Adams.

"Well, that's easy to settle," returned Captain Hall.

"All we have to do is to compare the names among Sommers' mail and the names in the list we have just captured."

To their chagrin the names did not prove

identical, thus leaving the inference that Captain Hall suggested—namely, that they were the names of men whom Sommers and his crew were endeavoring to corrupt.

"What are you going to do with this carcass?" asked Lieutenant Crawford, pointing to the prostrate figure from which the notebooks had been taken.

"Oh! I suppose we are going to send him to the hospital," returned Captain Hall. "But the fellow is not only a German, but a spy," protested the First Lieutenant of the Bearcats.

"You seem to forget, Crawford, that we are Americans and not Huns," snapped the commander of the Bearcats.

"Red Top, get an ambulance."

While they were waiting for the arrival of the wagon of mercy, the red-headed sergeant approached his captain and saluted.

"Well, what can I do for you, Sergeant?" asked the commander of the Bearcats.

"I should like to know, sir, what is to be done about that message concerning me that we found among his belongings."

"That's what I have been wondering over, too," replied his superior, a troubled look clouding his face.

For several minutes Captain Hall pondered

seriously and then called his two lieutenants, Crawford and Adams, into conference.

At the end of what seemed many minutes to the anxious sergeant of the Bearcats, Captain Hall turned to him and exclaimed:

"We hate to lose you, Sergeant.

"But until this affair has been worked out by the M. I. B., we deem it best that you should go to a place where you will be safe."

At the words, Red Top opened his mouth to protest, but before he could do so, Captain Hall continued: "So I intend to get permission from General Harris for you to put in two weeks at one of our liveliest rest camps."

"Aw, Captain, don't do that, please. What's the use of banishing me now that the fun is just started," protested the red-headed sergeant. "I'd rather play here with these Fritzies for two weeks than to go to any rest camp.

"Then you must remember that I am only a non-com, which means that I would have to sit around and look on while all the swells were enjoying themselves."

Realizing only too well the force of the last few words, Captain Hall turned to his pet sergeant and asked: "What would you like to do, then?"

Varied were the expressions of amused curiosity that settled upon the faces of the officers

within hearing distance as they waited for Red Top's reply.

But it is probable that not one was prepared for it when it came.

"If you please, sir," said Red Top, throwing back his shoulders, "I should enjoy nothing better than staying here and let these baby-killers try to pull off their stunt of kidnapping me."

For several moments the Bearcats' commander stared into the face of his first non-com.

"But now that they have learned that we have captured their ringleader in this camp and obtained the codes and despatches, they won't make any attempt on you, probably," said Lieutenant Adams.

"Just the same, I'd like to hang around and see," returned Red Top.

"Oh! well, if you feel like that about it, I suppose we must let you have your own way," declared Captain Hall.

"I wish, however, that you remain with us until Corporal Hawley and his firing squad return."

"That won't be a long time," asserted Red Top, who stood facing the gulley and could, therefore, see what was going on, whereas the commander of the Bearcats stood with his back to it.

"What do you mean by its not being a long time you will have to wait?" demanded the captain.

"I told Corporal Hawley to take his men away to send this traitor to his just deserts, so I imagine it will be an hour or more before he returns."

"You don't know that bird, Captain," exclaimed the red-headed sergeant. "He won't hike that major very far because the greater distance he takes him, the greater distance he will have to walk back."

At this comment, the officers laughed, but Red Top was not to be put out so easily, and with a smile continued: "Besides, Captain, he's coming over the bank just now."

After verifying the fact, the officers waited without comment until the corporal reached them.

As he joined them, the commander of the Bearcats briefly explained the situation.

To his amazement, Bud agreed entirely with his red-headed sergeant.

"If you are asking my opinion, sir," the corporal said, "I certainly consider it would be a mean trick to send our fiery wonder away just when the fun is beginning."

"I wish more of my men were like you," exclaimed Captain Hall.

"However, as they can't be, we must make the best of it.

"The sergeant here says that he wants to let the German spies try to kidnap him."

"I'm against any such plan as that," declared the corporal.

"Aw, have a heart," protested Red Top.

"There won't be more than ten or twelve of them and with you guys hanging about we can put the kibosh on any little trick and either round up some live ones or some who have gone West."

"But, how you going to let the rest of us know when the attack on you begins," demanded the broad-shouldered corporal. "We can't go round trailing you as a bodyguard without being seen."

"That's easy. I'm going to ask Captain Hall for one of the officers' whistles."

"Sure, you can have one, Sergeant," and, reaching in his pocket, he produced one of the shrill, piercing whistles that only officers were allowed under the regulations to carry.

"Keep it quiet that you have one, Red Top," he whispered as he gave it to him. "We can get by by saying that it was one of the Huns who used it trying to call aid."

Realizing that the attack upon himself by

the enemy spies might come at a most inopportune moment, Red Top determined to see if he couldn't draw their fire.

Accordingly, calling Bud to him, he unfolded his plan, which met with his corporal's hearty approval.

"Gee!" exclaimed that individual, "that sure will be great, Red Top, if we can pull it."

"It's easy enough to pull it," returned the red-headed sergeant. "The tough part of the job will be for you fellows to keep your eye on me and be close enough to join me when the attack occurs, without tipping the spies off."

"Leave that to me, Red Top," declared the corporal.

"All right, then I'm going to start right now," asserted the red-headed sergeant.

"Bye bye."

Alternately running and creeping along the ledge of the bank as though he would conceal his movements while on some desperate mission, Red Top soon put an appreciable distance between him and the Bearcats stationed in the camp.

It was the insignia of the infantry that had been upon the traitor they had brought from the German trench, and so the astute sergeant decided any danger to him would come from the infantry section of the camp. Accordingly,

as he approached there he grew more cautious, looking warily about him in all directions as he proceeded on his perilous way.

Keeping pace with him, but invisible because of the gulley bank which hid them from the eyes of those on the plateau which the gulley severed, Bud and the five men he had chosen to accompany him stumbled and slipped.

Of a sudden came the cry from Red Top: "Here come some of the Devils!"

At the words, Bud and his men crawled up the edge of the bank, taking every precaution that they might see and not be seen.

Even the barrels of their rifles they covered with sand so that the blue steel from which they were made might not catch a ray of the sun and cause a tell-tale glint that would throw a flash into the eyes of the men who were creeping down upon the side of the Bearcats.

With fingers on the triggers of their rifles ready to fire when Red Top should give the word, all the men awaited that command impatiently.

Came a sudden challenge from the foremost of the attacking party.

"Surrender, you red-headed devil," shouted the ringleader.

"But why should I surrender to *you*," de-

manded Red Top. "I'm an American noncom; you are dressed as Americans.

"So why on earth should you want me to surrender?"

Apparently just such a contingency had been foreseen by those who had planned the kidnapping.

Accordingly, the ringleader exclaimed, "We charge you with being a German spy.

"Why are you so far away from your station if you are not trying to sneak over into the German lines?"

"I was just out on a little tour of reconnaissance," returned the sergeant of the Bearcats.

"You can tell that to the C. O.," snorted the ringleader. "I don't like your actions.

"Come on in, boys; he's only one to the ten of us, and we can get him before he does much harm."

Obediently the attacking party set themselves for the charge.

But just as they leaped forward a volley from Bud's detail rang out, bringing several of the would-be kidnappers to the ground.

Came a second volley and more fell.

The remaining four took to their heels precipitately.

Springing from their place of concealment, the Bearcats rushed to their fallen enemies,

stripped them of all their valuables, their identification marks and then rushed back as fast as they could to take part in the attack on the German lines, the indication of which was evidenced by the beginning of the barrage.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE COUNTER ATTACK

WHILE Red Top and his squad had been busy with the rescue of the two French girls and the capture of the German spies, the other Yanks had carried forward General Harris' plan of campaign with a snap and dash which the hordes of Imperial Legions were unable to withstand.

The men who had been attacked by the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion, after a brief stand in which they had found it cost a heavy toll in human lives to resist the terrific mauling of the Bearcats' paws—in the form of cold steel bayonets—suddenly and with one accord, turned and ran back, as fast as their heavy equipment would permit, toward the rendezvous whence their flanking movement had started.

Many of them, in their haste to get beyond the reach of the cold steel of the bayonets at close quarters and the hot lead that poured from the American rifles into their ranks from a distance, threw aside their weapons and haversacks, that their speed in running away might be the greater.

No sooner had the field telephone flashed to General Harris the word that the Bearcats had started their folding back movement than he sent regiments of infantry against the rendezvous from the opposite direction.

As the boys in khaki, yelling like Comanche Indians, charged the German hordes, the Huns gave ground under the combined surprise and impetus of the attack.

But only for a moment.

Word had already reached the officers that their line had been pierced at the farm houses and that a section of the hated Yankee pigs was driving the much heralded troops of his Imperial Majesty like chaff before the wind.

Mindful of the orders which had come earlier in the day from their High Command, that the Yankee pigs must be annihilated, no matter what the cost, the officers rushed about among their demoralized troops, cursing their cowardice, ordering them to make their stand and beat back the attack, and, in instances where the curses and commands did not produce the desired result, beating their men with the flats of their swords, not always taking the trouble to be certain they only struck with the broad side of the blade.

The combination of cursing, commanding, and beating finally succeeded in checking fur-

ther flight, and sullenly the Huns faced the spirited attack of the men in khaki.

With rifles and machine guns they tore great holes in the advancing American troops.

Loath to send their men to such certain slaughter, the American officers checked their advance, while they sought strategic positions whence they could mow down the enemy without such frightful loss to themselves.

Taking instant advantage of the momentary cessation in the attack, the German officers told their men that they had stopped the hated Yankee pigs and that by a counter attack they would be able to throw them into complete rout, after which it would be possible to take prisoners at will.

"Remember," the Hun officers shouted to their men, "that your Master, the Kaiser, has promised a thousand marks to every man who shall bring in a Yankee pig as prisoner.

"The Yankee pigs have much money. All the possessions of a prisoner will belong to the man who takes him.

"There will also be a month's rest behind the lines, with food and wine awaiting the conquerors of these Yankee pigs."

Evidently inspired at the prospect of rich plunder and the thought of the release from

the terrors of the battle line, the Hun hordes launched their counter attack.

In wave upon wave they advanced.

With calm deliberation, the boys in khaki played upon them with leaden streams from their machine guns and with volley upon volley from their rifles.

But though the Germans in the front ranks fell, mowed down like grass before a scythe, the advance did not halt.

Ever from the rear came fresh hordes.

Just as the wave, when it nears the beach, curls in a crest and then pours down with torrential rush, so the waves of German soldiers crested on the piles of their dead and then broke over with irresistible force.

Faces drawn, the boys in khaki pumped their rifles in desperate effort to stop the oncoming flood of human sea.

But when their rain of lead failed to cause any check, orders were snapped to set themselves for hand to hand fighting.

Bayonets at a ready, the men from overseas awaited the impact.

When it came, they gave ground a step, then rallied and stood firm.

With all possible speed, General Harris rushed other regiments to the support of his sorely pressed troops in the front lines.

But the weight of the Hun hordes was overwhelming.

By sheer force of numbers they caused the American line to waver and then to bend.

"They're licked! They're licked! the Yankee pigs are giving way!" shouted the German officers, urging on their troops to the charge in a veritable delirium of frenzy.

"Like fun we're licked!" shouted one of the American officers. "The whole German army couldn't lick this bunch of Yanks.

"Come on, you Bearcats; let's go through this bunch of squareheads just as we went through that other crowd up the line a ways."

Came a tighter gripping of their rifles, with bayonets extended, a sudden crouching farther forward, then the Bearcats leaped into action.

And as they dove forward there rang out their battlecry:

"Ki-yi-yip! Ki-yi-yip!

"Now run, you Hun!"

As the words reached their ears they seemed to bring to the Hun hordes memories of that charge where the Bearcats earlier in the day had checked the German advance so effectually.

Frightful was the crash between the Yanks and the beasts in human form, and awful was

the havoc wrought by the steel bayonet claws of the Bearcats.

Again, just as in the morning, the Bearcats drove the enemy before them.

The counter attack had not only been checked, it had failed.

Rallied by the desperate charge of the members of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion, the boys in khaki in the infantry regiments regained their nerve and, with wild, terror-inspiring yells, threw themselves on the faltering Germans.

But before the Huns could effect a retreat their ranks were thrown into utter confusion by the arrival of the fugitives who had been rolled back upon them after their line was pierced at the farm houses.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BEARCATS TAKE SOME PRISONERS

AS the Yanks realized that they had succeeded in throwing the German Legions into complete rout, all memory of the gruelling hardships and trials they had passed through during the day were forgotten, and they threw themselves upon the milling, muddled Huns, yelling and screeching in fiendish glee.

"Take prisoners, get all the Huns you can," were the orders that were quickly passed from squad to squad.

"Here's where we shine," chuckled Red Top, turning to his sorely depleted squad.

"There are only seven of us, but each of the seven ought to be able to round up ten of these Heinies, now that we've got their goats."

"I didn't know that the squareheads had goats," retorted Bud.

"Well, then, their numbers, if you're so all-fired particular all of a sudden," flashed back the red-headed sergeant.

"Numbers is right," chimed in another.

"From the piles scattered around this gulley, it looks as though we sure had both num-

bers 'gone west' and numbers of prisoners, and——"

"We'll never get anywhere if we keep on gabbing," interrupted Red Top. "Come on now, it's ten men apiece!

"Let's go!"

At the sergeant's command, the seven Bearcats proceeded to get busy, and in an astonishingly short time they had herded together a parcel of squareheads which they cut out from the rest of the mass of cursing, struggling troops in the most approved cowboy fashion.

"Herd them over this way," commanded Red Top, indicating a section of the gulley where there were some scrub bushes which had escaped the devastation of the machine gun and rifle fire.

Glancing about them apprehensively, the Huns obeyed the bayonet punctuated commands to move.

In due course they reached the spot that the red-headed sergeant had selected for the work he had in mind, and as they came to it Red Top turned to Bud and demanded:

"What's the German word for 'halt'?"

"You can search me," retorted the corporal. "The only German I can remember are the words that mean 'keep quiet'."

"They ought to do as well as anything

under the circumstances," returned the red-headed sergeant, with a grin. "What are they?"

"'Bleib ruh'!"

A couple of times Red Top repeated these strange words to himself.

"It's no wonder you can't beat any sense into one of those squareheads when you have to make a noise like 'Bleib ruh' when you want to tell them to keep quiet."

And then, having delivered himself of this comment upon the language of his captives, he shouted "Bleib ruh!"

At the words, the Huns looked about in perplexity, then stopped in their tracks, but their amazement at hearing the words of their own language from the tongue of one of the hated Yankee pigs was evident in the expressions that settled upon their animal-like faces.

"Let this be an example to you Bearcats of what it means to obey orders," exclaimed Red Top with a chuckle.

"These squareheads are so well trained that even when an enemy tells them to be quiet they obey."

"Then what's the use of fighting any more?" demanded another member of the red-headed sergeant's squad.

"If your dope is right, all it would be neces-

sary to do to put an end to these baby murderers would be to rig up a lot of megaphones along the battle front and then at some prearranged hour to bark out in a mighty chorus a command, 'Bleib ruh'!"

"For that, you'll get kitchen duty, if we ever get anywhere again where there is a kitchen," exclaimed Red Top.

"Speaking of kitchens, when do we eat?" inquired Bud. "I haven't had anything but a hunk of bread you couldn't dent with a high explosive shell, and something they call coffee —but I'll swear it was nothing but a part of a puddle the lazy son-of-a-gun of a cook dished up to save himself the trouble of building a fire and boiling some real Java—since we started out last night."

"You're lucky to have had that much," retorted Red Top. "When you're fighting you don't eat, and when you're not fighting on the front you also don't eat unless some kind-hearted mess runner finds a hole in the barrage big enough for him and his outfit to crawl through."

"All of which may be highly edifying to you guys, but it doesn't get us anywhere with these squareheads. What are we going to do with them?" demanded the broad-shouldered corporal.

"I wish I knew some more German," exclaimed Red Top. "I'd put these Heinies through their paces. It must be a regular circus to run a bunch of men who do anything you tell them."

"Where do you get this 'I knew some more German'?" snorted Bud. "You only know two words now, and you wouldn't have known them if I hadn't told them to you."

"What's the matter of a little German between friends?" grinned Red Top. "But if it will please you any better, I'll say 'I wish that we knew a little more German'."

"Amendment's accepted," returned Bud.

Before the banter could be carried further it was interrupted by a voice exclaiming, "What's the meaning of this, sergeant?"

Turning, Red Top and the members of his squad looked into the grinning face of Lieutenant Crawford.

"We've rounded up a few Heinies, sir," returned Red Top.

At the words, the first lieutenant of the 337th Machine Gun Battalion looked from the seventy-odd prisoners of war to the seven grinning, battle-stained Bearcats.

"Do you mean to tell me that you boys captured all these prisoners?"

"Why not, sir?" returned the sergeant,

with a naïveté that brought a wider smile to the already smiling lieutenant.

"I told my fellows that each of us was good for ten of the squareheads, but I reckon we managed to pick up a few more."

"But what are you going to do with them? Why have you got them standing here?" asked the lieutenant.

"Answering your questions in order, sir," replied Red Top, with marked formality, "we're just wondering ourselves what we're going to do with them, and we've got them here because the combined knowledge of my squad's German was just enough to make them stand still."

"And can't you get them started again?" chuckled Lieutenant Crawford.

"Oh, we'll start 'em fast enough when we want to," declared Red Top.

"But how, if you don't know any German?" pursued the first lieutenant.

"With our bayonets, of course," answered the sergeant.

"But what are you going to do with the squareheads?"

"That's just what I was going to ask you, sir."

"Well, the 'Instructions for Officers' state that upon the capture of a prisoner the first

thing to be done is to disarm him; then to search for papers, dispatches, identification marks, and anything else he may have of value; then to deliver him either to the highest officer available or to the captain of the guard."

"Shall we deliver them to you, sir, then?" asked Red Top.

"Yes, you might do so, after you have completed the preliminary proceedings."

"All right, we'll start in, sir," grinned Red Top. And, stepping up to the man at the right file in the front rank of the prisoners, the red-headed sergeant pantomimed to the sour-faced Hun to turn over his weapons and belongings.

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Jerry, who had just rejoined his squad after having delivered the two French peasant girls safely at the headquarters of General Harris.

"I've got a better idea. Let's make the squareheads stand at attention and then go through them in approved wild west hold-up style.

"It sure would be fun to watch their faces while we were relieving them of their valuables as they stood at attention."

"It's one good idea, my bucko," agreed Red Top. "The only trouble is, I don't know the Dutch word for 'attention'."

"If that's all that's bothering you, why, it

needn't any longer, because I do know it," exclaimed Jerry.

"All right, what is it?"

"Achtung!"

"Those squareheads sure have some language," declared Red Top, in disgust. "Every time you give a command it sounds as though you had a pain. First it's a wail like 'Bleib ruh,' and then it's a moan like 'Achtung.'

"But here goes, let's try it out."

Then, turning to his prisoners, Red Top exclaimed, "Achtung!"

Surprised, but ever obedient, the prisoners came to a stiff attention.

"Now for the Jesse James stuff," chuckled Jerry.

And without more ado the seven members of the Bearcats proceeded to take all the weapons and valuables away from their prisoners.

"Now cut off their suspender buttons," commanded Lieutenant Crawford.

With joyful glee the Yanks obeyed, and with the accomplishment of this time-honored custom they rendered their prisoners entirely helpless.

CHAPTER XXX

OLD GLORY—LONG MAY SHE WAVE

LADEN down with the arms and property of the seventy-odd prisoners, Red Top's squad of Bearcats, at the direction of Lieutenant Crawford, drove their prisoners to the field headquarters of General Harris.

It so happened that the C. O. was talking with Captain Hall when they arrived.

As the first rank was approximately on a line with the officers, Red Top turned and, with great impressiveness, barked: "Bleib ruh!"

Instantly the prisoners, mindful of their previous experience, stopped, whereupon the red-headed sergeant turned to his superior officers and saluted.

After General Harris had looked from the squad of seven Bearcats to the seventy-odd prisoners and then at Captain Hall, with an expression of amazement and interrogation, he acknowledged the salute and said:

"What does this mean, sergeant?"

Before the non-com could reply, however, Lieutenant Crawford came up.

"This is a little present to you, General,

from these seven members of our Bearcats," he announced.

"You mean these seven boys captured all these Huns?"

"I do, sir."

For several moments General Harris was silent, then, turning to Captain Hall, he exclaimed:

"Captain, I am proud that your Bearcats have been under my command. Twice they saved the day.

"Whenever the battle of Cantigny is mentioned, the intrepid courage of the Bearcats will be remembered!"

THE END

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